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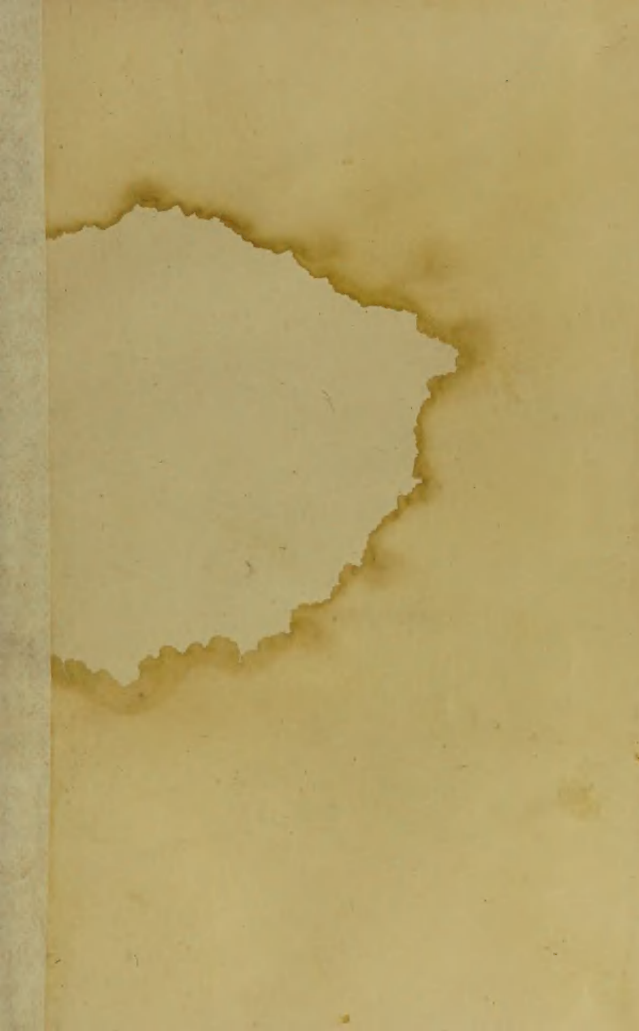


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THE

YOUNG MEN OF THE BIBLE.

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INTRODUCTION.

Said a celebrated German professor, "Whenever I appear before my pupils, I feel like making them a most respectful bow." And upon being asked the reason of this, he replied, "Because I see before me the men of the future—the power of the state, and of their age."

It is with feelings of equally profound reverence, not only for the statesmen and men of influence, but especially for the Christians of the future, that the author dedicates these pages to the young men of the present day. As he confers the greater benefit who cultivates the young and thrifty orchard, rather than the decaying one, or who toils faithfully in strengthening the foundations of an edifice, rather than in adorning its walls, so he who rightly exerts himself in behalf of the young, and in any way adds strength to the character upon which the life-structure of eternal ages shall be founded, occupies a sphere of usefulness which any servant of Christ may covet to enter and improve.

If secular history is "philosophy teaching by example," sacred history is a higher phi-

losophy, that is, religion, teaching in the same manner. The biographies of the Bible are simply the outgrowth or practical illustration of its teachings—like a kind of experimental garden, where we are shown first the seeds, and then, side by side, the sweet and bitter fruits of truth and error, holiness and sin.

Those with whom we are to hold converse are young men, like ourselves possessing all the susceptibilities and passions, and liable to the same temptations that belong to the youth of every age and land. And as he sometimes escapes a bitter experience who is willing to accept the hard-earned lessons of others' lives, so we may profitably study the paths of those who have gone before us, and thus gain instructions that are sometimes acquired only from the wreck of a shattered life.

Without attempting an exhaustive discussion of the themes before us, the author will be more than satisfied if these few life-studies shall lead any to a more thorough searching of the Scriptures, and a fuller acquaintance with its biographical treasures. For "wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word."

I.

Joseph;

OR,

THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH

"COME, while the morning of thy life is glowing,
Ere the dim phantoms thou art chasing die;
Ere the gay spell which earth is round thee throwing
Fades like the sunset of a summer's sky.
Life has but shadows, save a promise given,
Which lights the future with a fadeless ray;
Oh touch the sceptre, win a hope in heaven,
Come, turn thy spirit from the world away.

"Then will the crosses of thy brief existence
Seem airy nothings to thine ardent soul;
And shining brightly in the forward distance,
Will of thy patient race appear the goal.
Home of the weary, where, in peace reposing,
The spirit lingers in unclouded bliss,
Though o'er its dust the curtained grave is closing,
Who would not early choose a lot like this?"

THE YOUNG MEN OF THE BIBLE.

CHAPTER I.

JOSEPH.

GENESIS, CHAPS. 37, 39-50.

THERE is no portion of sacred history that is more full of varied incidents, or to the thoughtful mind more richly suggestive, than that which relates to the life of JOSEPH. No highly wrought romance, though clothed in all the charms which the most vivid imagination may impart, can be compared in thrilling interest to this simple, truthful Bible story.

After a childhood and youth passed happily in his father's house, and mark-

ed, as we must infer, by an unusual degree of parental affection and careful religious training, he first appears before us at the age of seventeen, a young man full of promise—his virtues, however, and the evident favoritism of his father subjecting him to the jealousy of his brethren, and thereby not only to much discomfort, but to the peril of his life. In the discharge of filial duty he soon affords them an opportunity to wreak their hatred upon him. Afar from home he is utterly in their power, and but for the intercession of a brother more tender-hearted than the rest. he would have been murdered.

But Providence always watches over its chosen instruments; and the passing of a caravan of merchants that way suggests the thought of selling him as a slave. Twenty pieces of silver conclude the cruel bargain; and while the guilty

brothers return home to add falsehood to their other crimes, and the aged patriarch mourns bitterly over the loss of his best-loved son, Joseph engages with his customary fidelity in the service of Potiphar his master, rising gradually in his confidence, until he becomes the virtual head of his large household.

Thus are they ever the most prospered who, instead of yielding moodily to the first pressure of misfortune, rise resolutely above it, applying themselves faithfully to present duty, both patiently waiting for and at the same time hopefully working out their deliverance.

But every new station brings with it new temptations, and soon Joseph is called to struggle between duty and the seductions of sinful pleasure. His mistress becomes his artful tempter, and assails his firm principles with a persistency which is only equalled by the force

of his brave resistance. He is brought to that crisis which, with almost every form of sin and vice, must sooner or later be reached and passed by the youth—the turning-point whence open out the alluring path of iniquity upon the one hand, and upon the other the straight path of holy self-denial—a point upon which often an eternity revolves. *How will he meet it?*

We read not of a moment's suspense, and if there was any inward struggle, it was not evinced in outward hesitancy; for instantly taking his stand upon the high ground of religious obligation, he replies, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Noble reply, and indeed the only one that is equal to the emergencies of temptation. The youth who can intrench himself in the conviction that it expresses, as in a castle, will find it a fortress

which no allurements of evil can undermine, and against which the very "gates of hell shall not prevail."

The prophet has said, "It is good that a man should bear the yoke in his youth," and Joseph certainly was not exempt from whatever of hard discipline is requisite to the development of a strong, robust piety. For soon he lay a prisoner, the innocent victim of his mistress' wrath, accused of a crime which he from his very soul abhorred. Yet still making the most of his situation, and sustained by the consciousness of innocence, he, like Paul and Silas in their bonds, shows that the Lord is with him, and patiently awaits the hour of his vindication.

Meantime the stately march of Providence moves on, and events ripen for his deliverance and yet greater exaltation, and soon he stands before the king, and

rides, amid the acclamations of the multitude, as minister of state, and at the age of thirty occupies the highest position in the kingdom, next to the throne. Here his wise counsels prove the salvation of his adopted country; and a nation kept alive during a protracted famine, his own father's family furnished with sustenance and a home, and the foundation laid for the sublime history of the race of Israel, are the successive providential developments connected with his honored career.

Without dwelling upon all the lessons of this wonderful life, for they are many, let us confine our attention to this one, which it manifestly teaches—THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SEASON OF YOUTH.

I. This will be evident from the fact that youth is *the formative period* of life.

It is indeed true that a high degree of

importance attaches to every rational, intelligent being at whatever point of his career. The merest infant is a casket in which lie inwrapped immortal destinies, and the most degraded form that beats with human life carries under its filth and rags the germ of endless development. The soul of man, wherever it exists, and in all the ruin that sin has caused, is still a wondrous structure. Its capabilities so vast and varied, its susceptibility to pain and pleasure so exalted, its destiny so gigantic, who can measure them?

But there are stages of existence which, by reason of their relative bearings, possess a peculiar importance—critical periods which give their shape and character to all that follow. As in the physical history of our globe, the processes seeming to have been undergone thousands of years ago decided the

formation of mountain and ocean, continent and island—so, long after time has closed, we shall look back to certain crises in our individual career when the moral elements within us were fused and shaped into fixed traits and settled destinies. And such a period is *youth*.

When and where did Joseph acquire those principles which lay at the foundation of his character and success? Not surely in the days of captivity to a heathen master; for not only was he then surrounded by circumstances highly unfavorable to moral improvement, but even then his virtues shone with a force that betokened years of patient culture. His biography admits us only to the fruit-laden tree, leaving us to infer what must have been the seeds that alone could ripen into such results.

We may therefore go back to his first appearance upon the stage of history, a

youth of seventeen, and note the silent process by which each separate virtue rooted itself in his nature, sending down their strong fibres into his soul's depths preparatory to their shooting upward and outward in his noble deeds. For as with the body, so with the mind and heart, the youth gains not the strength of manhood at a leap, but only by a gradual growth, and constant, unperceived development. The man of lofty virtues and high attainment may seem to spring forth at once, full armed, to grapple with events, but it is not so; each joint of that armor has been forged in secret, often too in pain, amid the fires of self-discipline, and riveted by hard blows of temptation that had threatened to dash it in pieces. We must not always give to mature life all the credit of its deeds, but must the oftenest go back to early youth or even

childhood for their secret spring. Manhood may develope that which already exists, may build higher and more majestic the structure already begun; but to youth belongs, I had almost said, the creative power—the power that gives to manhood and old age, and generally to the immortality beyond, their bent and direction.

Joseph at thirty, the upright, honored prime-minister of Egypt, was only the Joseph of seventeen developed into a broader, fuller, higher life. The elements of his character were in both instances the same. In the Washington who, full of years and of honors, retires from the presidency of the Republic, you cannot fail to recognize all the moral and mental features of the youthful lieutenant. The impression therefore that every man makes upon his age and country is not so much determined

by the events and associations of his manhood, as by the ruling principles or passions of his boyhood and youth; so that you are now in the bud what you shall be in the flower, and with few and rare exceptions, your present is the faithful type and prophet of your most distant future.

It is an eventful moment when the masterpiece of the sculptor's skill is being cast in the mould, for soon it shall harden, and whatever be its faults or virtues, it must go down to posterity unchanged. It is an hour of thrilling interest when a nation's destinies hang trembling in the balance, and a word or act may shape them for unborn generations. But Oh where, in the case of an individual, is there a period so eventful, so fraught with tremendous consequences for good or evil, as when the youth pauses upon the threshold of active

life, and yields his plastic mind to the abiding impress of truth or error, and forms those habits which shall be inwoven with the whole texture of his coming existence?

Could the young man who is disposed to trifle with solemn truth have the future unveiled to his view, and see this or that evil practice imbittering a career that is now so full of hope—see the silken threads of sinful pleasure turning into cords that shall strangle his soul's life—see the luxuriant harvest of disgrace, poverty, wretchedness that shall spring from the seeds he so recklessly sows, he would surely be aroused to sober reflection. Or could he who now struggles successfully against temptation, look beyond the present conflict and victory, and trace their beneficent effects upon the confirmed principles of manhood and old age, he would surely be

inspired with fresh strength, nor think the most hard-earned conquest dearly bought.

Let this thought then be lodged deeply in every youthful mind: that *now* is the crisis of life—that every hour of time, every habit of thought, feeling, or action, the book or paper you read, the words you hear, the associates you choose, the purposes you cherish, each makes its indelible mark, and all work together in forming you for honor, usefulness, and happiness, or for shame, misery, and death.

II. The season of youth is also important in view of *the wondrous possibilities for good or evil that lie wrapped in it.*

Who could have foreseen, even with Joseph's prophetic dream in his mind, that the young man who was driven a fettered slave into Egypt should in a few

years occupy the highest position in the gift of the king; that he whose estimated worth was expressed in twenty pieces of paltry silver, should be the man of his age, and make his abiding impress upon all coming generations? Who would have beheld in the shepherd-boy David, the mighty warrior, the illustrious monarch, the inspired poet, that he afterwards became?

We may indeed in every instance trace a necessary connection between the traits of youth and the successes or reverses of mature life; we may say in general that prudence, industry, and piety will produce corresponding results; but who can in any given instance forecast the future, and predict the coming position, deeds, and influences of the young man? He may possess elements of greatness, unsuspected by himself or others until occasion calls them forth, and he be-

comes an instrument for carrying out some grand design of Providence. Circumstances now unforeseen, developments unlooked for, may yet clothe with vast power for good or evil one who to-day is esteemed of no account. Even apart from any peculiar endowments or favoring circumstances, there is that in the bare position of any youth which may well cause him to "rejoice with trembling" in view of the possible future which he may, if he will, work out.

Look at his position. He stands upon the threshold of life, strong of nerve, hopeful of heart, girding himself for his allotted tasks. Within him are powers susceptible of an endless culture and improvement—a mind that only awaits the husbandry of patient discipline in order to yield the choicest fruits of wisdom, on which a world may feast; a heart to whose expansive power there

is absolutely no limit, and whose sympathies may yet bless the age and the race; and before him, Oh what a future if he be spared to enter, and have the skill to improve it! What opportunities that await some strong hand to grasp them, and extract their hidden blessings; what opening avenues to heights of honorable usefulness awaiting the men whose firm steps alone can climb them; what unfinished tasks of the world and the church, of science, philanthropy, religion, appeal to his worthiest ambition, and invite his most ardent endeavors; what uncultivated wastes all ready for his moral ploughshare; what harvests ready for his sickle; what work for all minds, all hands, all hearts; what a sublime career for every youth who has the will and the faith to embrace it! The years are rich in promise, and none can estimate

the power of the young man who, though to-day weak and despised as Joseph among his brethren, yet, like him, alive to his position and his capabilities, resolves to make the most of his coming years, to make the most of himself, the most of events and opportunities, the most of time and eternity. I care not whether he have genius, wealth, or friends; for strong sense, good principles, and ardent piety are a man's best wisdom and riches, and God himself is his friend. Such an one will rise above every discouragement, and will be astonished to find how, year by year, he is made a blessing and an honor to his race.

No attentive reader of history can fail to be impressed with the important part which young men have borne in the great affairs of the world. Joseph, before reaching the age of thirty, moulds

and directs the policy of a mighty nation. David at eighteen is anointed king of Israel, and at twenty-two delivers his nation from a harassing foe. Daniel at about eighteen takes his rank above the wisest men of his age. Luther at twenty-nine revolutionizes the whole moral aspect of Christendom; and so Alexander, Napoleon, and Washington achieved their greatest prodigies of skill and valor before the age of thirty-five.

I say not that *every* youth is likely to occupy important posts in society, or to wield commanding influences; but he who fills the humblest sphere to its outermost limit with holy activities, living with earnestness, not for himself, but for God and his fellow-man, thereby exalts and ennobles that sphere be it ever so degraded, and impresses himself upon his times, and is sorely missed when he is gone; while upon the other hand, as

with Joseph and hosts of others, he who is faithful in that which is least, is the more likely to be summoned, in providence, to the same fidelity in that which is much, that so "to him that hath should be given, and he should have more abundance."

What should this teach us? Not by any means an overweening confidence, nor a proud ambition, nor an affectation of that superior wisdom which is chiefly to be gained by experience—for these are fatal to the young—but simply a sober realization of the momentous position we occupy as the "heirs of all the ages, foremost in the files of time," and a corresponding improvement of that position by all means within our power.

Does any youth, timid and shrinking, sigh to himself, "I am nothing, and can do nothing in my present and prospective circumstances that will be of any

great benefit either to myself or others?" I would have you take heart from the career we have been contemplating, and learn that providence has its especial blessings in reserve for those who by the patient culture of right principles are prepared to improve them. The current of events upon which you are launching is covered by a misty veil which no created eye can penetrate, and with every coming day you can only conjecture its hidden morrow. The wrong habit, therefore, that you carelessly form, the erroneous principle you cherish, may, for aught you know, yet prove a curse not only to yourself, but to multitudes of others; and so, upon the other hand, the flame of piety you now foster amid tears and discouragements may yet warm and quicken unnumbered souls.

There is much in this very uncertainty

of events, coupled as it is with the assured general tendency of certain principles and courses, that invests the season of youth with its peculiar charms, and fills it with exciting motives and glowing aspirations. Happy are they who go forth in the strength of truth and right to the great life battle, neither cowering before temptation or adversity, nor overelated with success—full of hope, and fuller yet of faith—wise to observe providences, great of heart, distrustful always of self but never of God, resolute in purpose, diligent in action, lifted above all baser motives by those drawn from God, Christ, and eternity, and seeking their reward in the skies. Into their laps shall be poured the real treasures of life, if not the riches of this world, and into their hearts a heavenlike blessedness; and their lives, be they long or short as we measure them, shall be long

enough to show how noble is a true Christian manhood spent for worthy ends. The possible of such a life becomes the actual, and the waking dreams of aspiring youth, like Joseph's, become glorious realities.

Would you look at the converse of this picture? Take from the hovel or the gutter one of those numerous wrecks of our poor humanity, who attest the *possible evil and ruin* into which the most promising life may degenerate. Be not shocked if we drag such a one before the refined reader, and let us question him. He will speak of high hopes, golden opportunities, and bright prospects that marked his early years, but alas, he was not equal to their improvement. He sighs over the destiny which he might have seized, but that he indolently let it slip from his grasp, while he lent a too willing ear to pleasure's syren song, and

surrendered his body and soul to temptation, until the years that might have been useful, honored, and happy, became little else than one long, drear captivity, whose chains have gathered strength by age, and whose burdens have more and more enfeebled his once resolute will, until he can only cry out despairingly from the depths which he vainly tries to escape. The hopeful "I may be" of his earlier years is changed to that saddest wail that can issue from human lips here or hereafter: "I might have been this or that, had I only been faithful." But youth comes not again; and though he repent ever so bitterly, he cannot turn back the sun of life in its course. "The harvest is past, and the summer is ended." Oh who would not take warning from his miserable career!

III. The importance of youth is plainly

evinced by *the whole tenor of the word of God.*

Who can have failed to notice that in its appeals to the young its tones seem to breathe an unusual tenderness, as if expressing the very inmost heart of the loving God? To none others does it speak with such intense solicitude, to none does it hold out such glowing promises and invitations. Its biographies of the great and good are almost all illustrative of early piety, and its teachings might almost be summed up in the kind appeal, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

The Bible then is not only the fit companion of the aged saint, the joy of the afflicted and the mourner's solace, it is preëminently the young man's guide and counsellor, and they who study it most will best realize the truths we have been contemplating.

The youth then does in many respects occupy one of the most solemn and important positions in the universe of God. And what should be the effect of this momentous truth upon his mind and heart?

Let it beget a deep humility; for how feeble is the instrument, and yet how grand the work, and how unmeasurable the responsibilities!

And connected with this, let there be a proper self-respect, a due appreciation of the powers and influences intrusted to us, which shall keep us mindful of our duties, and which should be equally removed from pride and from inglorious timidity.

And with this, thoughtfulness—a serious inspection of our character and habits, a wise forecasting of the years to come, a patient schooling of the mind in its highest wisdom, that our future find us not unprepared to meet it.

And chiefly, let our subject form a powerful argument for early piety, for the embracing of that religion which is God's armor to strengthen weak man for his conflict—religion whereby youth is clothed with its highest charms, manhood made more manly and godlike, old age clad with unearthly grace and beauty, and eternity filled up with “pleasures for evermore.”

Would you know the secret of Joseph's happy and successful career, and of every life of man that is truly noble and blessed? The God of truth and love bends down and whispers it to your hearts. Oh listen to the gracious words: “*My son, give me thy heart.*”

II.

David;

OR,

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE YOUNG MAN.

"We are living, we are dwelling
In a grand and awful time,
In an age on ages telling;
To be living is sublime.

"Will ye play then, will ye dally
With your music and your wine?
Up, it is Jehovah's rally;
God's own arm hath need of thine.

"Worlds are charging, heaven beholding;
Thou hast but an hour to fight:
Now the blazoned cross unfolding,
On, right onward for the right.

"Oh, let all the soul within you
For the truth's sake go abroad;
Strike! let every nerve and sinew
Tell on ages, tell for God.

CHAPTER II.

DAVID.

1 SAMUEL 16 : 30; 2 SAMUEL 1 : 13.

How much of human history is of a piece with the transaction recorded in the sixteenth chapter of the first book of Samuel. Short-sighted man, dazzled, like the prophet, by "the outward appearance," often beholds in some Eliab of imposing exterior, one anointed of the Lord to do His great works ; but He who "looketh upon the heart" disappoints the expectation, and summons a David from the sheepfold, a Matthew from the derided office of publican, a Peter, Andrew, James, and John from their fishing-nets, to become his powerful instruments for benefiting the race. Thus, in almost all the great civil and religious movements of the world, "God hath chosen the fool-

ish things of the world to confound the wise," and "the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty," "that no flesh should glory in his presence."

But what was there in the stripling DAVID, not yet out of his teens, that commended him to the Lord as the fit successor of Saul upon the throne of Israel? He certainly possessed a rare union of gifts and graces that went to qualify him for his destined position. To the genius of the poet he added all the prowess of the warrior and the far-reaching skill of the statesman. Gentle, mild, and tender of heart, his magnanimity to his foes enhanced the lustre of his victories; his devout humility, the invariable attendant of true greatness, set off in more striking colors his invincible courage; while the ardor of his holy zeal was only equalled by the soundness of his judgment and

discretion, and his manly self-reliance by the strength of his trust in God. Yet it was neither his wisdom, nor genius, nor bravery that made him the chosen of the Lord out of all the hosts of Israel; but rather his strong piety, that crowning gift which binds together all others, and alone gives them unity and completeness; and which, especially when embraced early in life, lays the foundation for the highest possible attainments and the greatest possible usefulness of man. When men select a person for some important post, they ask whether his youthful education and habits of life have been such as to fit him for it. So with God; only, while not overlooking other and necessary qualifications, he lays the chief stress where many lay the least, upon *the heart's* early discipline in the school of religion.

David was not in this respect found

wanting. "Often, no doubt, in the solitude of the fields, so favorable to holy contemplation, surrounded by his flocks, the unconscious types of the intelligent multitudes who, in after years, should 'hear his voice and follow him,' and the symbols of God's people in their relations to the divine Leader, he had sung to his harp that wonderful psalm, 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want;' and when, the flocks all gathered in, the moon and stars looked down upon him with their quiet beauty, he sung, 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork.'"

But he was now to exchange these scenes of holy delight for the most arduous responsibilities that belonged to his land and his age—was to be invested with the reins of kingly power at just that period which should decide the structure and character of the government for cen-

turies to come. New duties require a new consecration ; and the Spirit of the Lord, of which the oil poured upon him by the prophet was only the outward emblem, anointed him with fresh heavenly influences. Thenceforth his high natural endowments assumed a new and more exalted character ; and David was a braver warrior, a better statesman, and a sweeter poet, as well as a holier servant of God, by reason of the divine impulse thus given him.

It is always so. None are so gifted that their powers and talents may not be enhanced by the indwelling Spirit of God, which adds wisdom to the wise and strength to the strong ; and by giving to all our powers a higher direction and a grander scope, makes one more of a man in every worthy element of his nature.

It is true that David had his faults, as who has not ? Yet in these we may see

that he had the same temptations and infirmities to contend with that we all have; while in the bitter penitential confessions and cries for mercy that now and then interrupt the joyous strains of his noble Psalms, we may learn both the sorrow of heart that should attend every departure from God, and the means by which the wanderer may return.

In the prominent features of the earlier life of David, we find illustrated *the duties and responsibilities of the young man*. These duties, as will be seen, are of a threefold character, as they pertain *to society, to the state, and to the church*.

I. Notice first those of a *social* character.

God has so formed us that we can neither divest ourselves of the instinctive impulse which, like a chain, binds us to those with whom we mingle, nor ignore

the obligations that these relationships involve. We all have, as it were, two lives; or rather, two aspects of the same individual life; and the one that is outer, and that forms its part of the great, strong life pulsating through the arteries of domestic, friendly, and business intercourse, has its invariable laws, that are as binding as any that relate to the secret soul—laws too that are not to be found in codes of man's devising, not in customs or usages of society, though they be entrenched in the most venerable antiquity, and come to us with the sanction of a thousand years; but only in the revealed will of God, in the one law that embraces every other—love to God first, and then to man.

In this comprehensive principle we discover an important element of David's beautiful life; all his relations, whether public or private, being characterized by

a spirit of noble self-sacrifice. Risking his life when a mere youth for the safety of his flock, he afterwards exposes it freely for the benefit of his country; and if in subsequent years he sometimes listened to the appeals of pride or ambition, the whole tenor of his career was marked by a generous consideration for others' welfare—by devoted, lofty friendships, and a large-hearted philanthropy.

In this behold the root from which grows out the proper discharge of every human obligation, whether to God or our fellow-men; even as its opposite, selfishness, is the poisonous root of all that sin and sorrow which has overrun the moral world with weeds and briars, and turned the heart of man from a garden into a tangled wild of iniquities.

Man never was intended to live only for himself, and therefore it is that no man can be happy who lives for himself.

The one proposition flows necessarily from the other; for man, out of the path in which God has formed him to walk, must be unhappy and constrained; as the bird, formed to soar towards the sun, would be miserable if tied, with clipped wings and fettered feet, to the ground; or as the seraph, formed for the atmosphere of holiness and praise, would change his songs to sighings if condemned to walk the thorny path of human life.

Let it then be settled in every mind that the fundamental law of all social relationship is to be found in the dictates of a kind, benevolent heart, that wishes well to all and evil to none; that prompts alike the friendly word and courteous demeanor, and that goes to make up what nothing else can either make or successfully counterfeit, the true gentleman. With this as a basis, one will scarcely require any other special rules for his

guidance than that all-inclusive one of the gospel, "As ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them."

He who obeys this will ever be upon the alert to impart, as well as to receive ; to confer benefits, as well as to enjoy them ; and in conferring, to enjoy them all the more. As the heavenly bodies, moving harmoniously through space, reflect upon one another the light that warms them, so we, each in our orbit, whether as stars of greater or lesser magnitude, are to regard ourselves as charged with a mission to every one with whom we associate ; our chief question being, not, How may I derive comfort or happiness ? but, How may I cause other hearts to sing for joy ?—not, How many blessings may I pluck for myself from the boughs that overhang life's wayside ? but, How many may I disseminate ? Some persons are like the gaudy, odorless flowers of

the tropics, in which all the fertilizing influences of sun and earth go into brilliant outward show, pleasing to the eye, but nothing more. Others resemble the blossoms of our orchards, with their modest purity of garb and color, yet blessing all with the fragrance that they exhale, and then only dying to turn into fruit for man, as if their motto were, "None of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself." Would that this motto might be inscribed upon the opening portals of every youthful life.

Most remarkably was this principle illustrated in the life of David. His disinterested friendship with Jonathan, sealed by solemn and repeated covenant, is one of the most charming instances of manly affection that we have upon record. What can be more moving than that scene where, ere he flies from the hostility of Saul, he lingers in parting embrace with

his tried and faithful friend; and "they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded?" Or what more beautiful than the plaintive dirge with which he lamented this friend, slain in battle: "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me; thy love was wonderful, passing the love of women?" And so every young man is the better for cherishing strong friendships with the wise and good; and he whose soul is knit to one or more chosen associates, with whom he can sympathize in right aims and feelings, is thereby the better armed against temptation and confirmed in paths of virtue.

But there is a trait that is far more exalted than the love of one's friends; and that is, love to an enemy. The best of men are liable, by their very virtues, to provoke the hostility of the envious

and malicious; and from the time of which it is significantly written, "Saul eyed David from that day forward," he was hunted by this degenerate king with a relentless hate ; yet, after enduring an almost unparalleled series of persecutions from him, no sooner does he find Saul within his power than he makes it an occasion for the display of a forbearance that is yet more unparalleled. Twice does he thus spare the life that is spent in hot pursuit of his own blood ; and when Saul dies, under other hands, he not only mourns him in touching elegy, but sternly avenges his death upon his murderer.

How different is this from that standard of worldly honor which calls resentment manly, and brands with cowardice the lofty heart that, instead of meanly crushing its enemy, dares to conquer itself, and thereby achieves the greater victory over its foe.

He who cherishes this spirit of kind-heartedness and magnanimity, governed by Christian principle, cannot fail to become a worthy, useful, and beloved member of society. He has in his possession the key that will unlock all hearts, though they be barred against him; and the means not only of his own temporal advancement, but what is better still, of discharging with fidelity his weighty responsibilities to others.

Without noticing at length the remaining catalogue of social duties, let it suffice here to impress this one paramount thought, that every youth is, by the very laws of his nature and the force of circumstances, no less than by the precepts of the Bible, solemnly accountable to God for the manner in which he discharges them. For your influence over your friend, for your hourly example, for your measure of fidelity to every trust,

be it great or small ; for your connivance at wrong, whether in theory or practice ; for all the nameless traits and habits that go to make up your personality, and which you more or less impress upon those around you, “know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.”

We can perhaps scarcely expect that they who are now going off the stage of human action should do much to exalt the standard of social morality that is now so low ; but many do look with hope to the rising generation fearlessly to apply the pure precepts of Jesus to every department of human intercourse, until they shall refine that which is now debased and polluted, and inaugurate a better era. Let not these hopes be disappointed. Only dare to do right—dare to be singular, if needs be, though the finger of scorn be pointed at you, and your

spirit chafe under your comrades' sneers or laughter; let it be enough that God smiles upon you—dare to strip off sin's artful disguises, to despise its hollow mockeries, to lay open its shallow pretences, and to make your face as adamant against both its wiles and its threats—dare to go forth to battle with the Goliaths of evil, though they be of giant stature, and their spears like weavers' beams, and they defy in swelling words the armies of Isreal; for the stripling David, with his sling and stone, shall conquer them in the name of the Lord of hosts. Be valiant for the truth, patient under opposition, meek under injury, strong in the anointing Spirit of God; and then the great social evils that we now deplore shall be slain, the better day shall dawn upon the human brotherhood, and the glad reign of love, virtue, peace, and holiness, for which men have

so long waited, shall bless this weary world.

II. The second class of responsibilities are those of a *civil* character, or those owed by the young man *to his country*.

David, though brought up amid scenes of comparative retirement, shut out from the influences of the Israelitish court, was one of the most devoted of patriots. The first act which drew all eyes upon him, and marked him as the hero of his times, was his fearless encounter with Goliath, with which all are familiar. Whether we consider the pure, unselfish patriotism, the unfaltering courage, or the sublime faith in Israel's God which he evinced upon that occasion, we cannot but linger admiringly upon the narrative, and regard it as one of the most memorable exploits in the annals of the world.

The same qualities which he then dis-

played characterized his whole career, both as a subject and as a king. Thoughtless of personal danger when his country was in peril, indifferent to personal comfort when his comrades or subjects were suffering, loyal to his king, even when branded by him as an outlaw, and ever acknowledging the reigning Jehovah as the true sovereign of Israel, he is in many respects a model which may safely be held up before the future citizens, law-makers, and sovereigns of this republic.

We may learn from him that the first great duty of every citizen is that of an abiding love for his country. This is one of the native instincts of the noble heart. History tells us of many a devoted hero, reared under an oppressive despotism, and groaning under unjust exactions, with little in the character of his ruler to excite any thing like generous enthusiasm, who yet has poured out his blood and his

treasures in willing sacrifice for his country's good. How much more then, under a form of government like our own, should every citizen be a patriot, and love and revere his native land with an affection that is commensurate both with the priceless cost of her liberties, and the greatness of her civil and religious privileges. Indeed, however it may be in other lands, in this one the youth may be said to draw in the love of country with his native air: and it is as justly taken for granted that all will seek and maintain her interests, as that the child shall love its mother, on whose bosom it has been cradled and of whose life it is a part.

It follows from this, that in no country upon the face of the earth is it more important that all should rightly understand and faithfully fulfil the duties of citizenship, than in this. While ignorance is the natural strong-hold of tyranny, know-

ledge is the very throne of civil liberty. It is the interest of despotisms to foster a blind, unreasoning obedience to arbitrary law; but where, as with us, the humblest has his voice in the administration of public affairs, more depends upon the enlightened sentiment of the masses, than upon even the skill of temporary rulers or the character of existing laws.

It is therefore important that we become familiar with the history of the republic and with its mode of government. As David was wont to rehearse in glowing strains God's dealings with his people, so should we review the successive providential interpositions by which the little one, nurtured amid storms and trials, has become a mighty nation. And this, not only that we may the better understand the nature of our institutions and their cost, and learn the great principles that underlie the civil fabric and constitute

its safeguard, but especially that we may learn to give glory to Him in whom states, nations, and empires, as well as individuals, "live and move and have their being."

I will add, that loyalty to government is an essential element of true patriotism. If ever any subject was strongly tempted to trifle with a corrupt civil authority, David was; but mark how, during all those years when he was pursued by royal hatred and perfidy, he maintained an unbroken allegiance to king Saul.

Although we possess, as we think, the most simple as well as the most perfect form of government that has ever been devised, it is scarcely to be expected that it should always work without friction, or even discontent; but the intelligent citizen or ruler will not be swerved by these from his path of firm adherence to law and order, and the maintenance

of the powers that be, as ordained of God.

David was elevated, in the providence of God, from the sheepfold to the throne. It is a peculiarity of our wise national system, that similar advancement is not only possible, but matter of frequent occurrence among us. But while none can forecast his individual career, this is certain: every American youth will be, if spared, a power for good or for evil in shaping the destinies of a mighty nation. Oh then be alive to your solemn responsibilities, and discharge them with fidelity, in the fear of God. Be true each to your trust, as the guardian of precious liberties. Ever prefer the nation's good to your individual advancement. Listen rather to honesty than to ambition, and to duty rather than to temptation. Adopt as your motto the noble words of him who said, "I had rather be right than be

president," and never, no, never let your first warm love for your country grow cool under the pressure of party faction; never, no, never lend your ear or voice or influence to aught that is inconsistent with its largest and most united interests.

III. A third class of obligations are those owed by the young man *to the church*.

What can surpass in beauty and fervor the expressions of love for Zion with which the Psalms of David so richly abound! His devotion to the church and her interests even exceeded the love that he bore to his country, and his patriotism was enhanced by his piety. Devoutly acknowledging the God of his fathers in all the exploits of his earlier career, one of the first acts of his kingly authority was to restore the neglected ark of God to its proper place, with appropriate so-

lemnities ; and his next, had God permitted it, would have been the building of a magnificent temple in which to enshrine that sacred symbol of the divine presence. "See," said he to Nathan, "I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains." But although his pious purpose was frustrated, it being left for his son Solomon to fulfil, David required no such monument to attest his affection for the cause of Zion. It breathed in his whole life ; and those effusions of his sanctified spirit which have come down to us, do of themselves form a temple more glorious and enduring than the most costly material structure, resounding through all generations with holy praise to Israel's God.

Now although none of us occupy David's position of commanding influence, or are gifted with his marvellous genius, yet the same church and cause of God,

which is one and the same in all ages, has its strong, paramount claims upon our dutiful service, and lays upon every youth responsibilities that are proportioned to his situation, means, and influences.

“Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?” is a question as applicable to-day as when it was first propounded, more than two thousand years ago; and the answer comes to us from the fresh grave of many a standard-bearer in Zion, and from the silvered hairs and tottering forms of others, “Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children.” Through all generations of God’s people, there has ever been going on this transfer of weighty interests from the older to the younger, a bequeathing of the dear cause of God—richer legacy than gold or silver, more momentous charge than houses or lands—

to those who, in the vast procession of the living, move on to fill the places of the dying and the dead. And, blessed be Abraham's God, there never has been, and there never shall be wanting "a seed to serve Him."

And now upon the young, the strong of the present time, are being gradually devolved these interests. Providence fastens them upon their shoulders, and either to shake them off or to trifle with them, is to incur God's just displeasure, and lay up a fearful account against the judgment-day. The only question then must be—and let us meet it like men—What are the duties of the young man to the church, and how may he best discharge them?

I should be unfaithful to your souls did I not say, first of all, you owe it to the church, to yourselves, and to the God of your fathers, that you at once

seek and continually cultivate *an earnest, personal piety*. This is to the church, only in a higher degree, what patriotism is to the state, the basis of all intelligent, hearty, and well-directed action. None can fulfil these solemn trusts without it.

Here then, at the outset, you are met with the cordial invitation to number yourselves with the people of God, not in name, in profession only, but in the hearty sympathy and fellowship of souls redeemed by the same blood of Christ, consecrated by a heavenly anointing to the same work of Christ, and made heirs of his Father's love and his Father's house. Oh withhold not yourself from God's people, from your true and eternal happiness. "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

We live in a time that is full of interest and high incentive to every lover

of Zion. This is preëminently the age of *Christian enterprise*, and therefore one that calls loudly for the consecrated energies of *the young and the active*. Look abroad through the world: see how old systems of error and superstition are crumbling to their rotten foundations; see how the blind nations are feeling amid the darkness for the truth that shall give them light and end their gropings; see the fresh, radiant life that is beginning to animate the reviving church upon earth, vitalizing the great body of Christ with an electric sympathy; see the rapid march of Providence, the swift progress of the awakening Spirit and the word through almost all lands; see the faint dawnings of the millennial era that greet the eye of faith, and tell me, is it not a glorious, a *sublime* thing to be a *young man* now, to be coming on instead of going off the stage of action—a *sublime*

thing to be privileged to bear a hand in carrying to its triumphant issue the precious cause for which Christ died, for which martyrs have bled, and to which the good and the holy in all ages have devoted their best energies? Oh, ours is the most favored generation that has ever lived, and the era now dawning shall be the brightest that has yet burst upon our globe. Why does not every heart leap forward to the embrace of so golden a future; why does not every voice and hand feel its strong impulse, and draw from it the incentive to a holier consecration?

Men, Christians, of that future, would you be equal to its grand events, and stand with the honored ones who shall be instrumental in inaugurating them? Then now, to-day, buckle on your armor and engage in the warfare, that you may share in the victories of Zion. Awake

to your solemn position, to your heavy responsibilities; rise to exalted views of duty and of privilege; enter into the very spirit of the church's angelic mission, and into close sympathy with Christ your King; bring all the enthusiasm of your nature to bear upon this work, and with it the holier ardor that springs from faith and love. Ask ever, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and whether the responsive voice of the Lord that bought you point to some lowly sphere of action or endurance, or to posts of honor in his church; whether to some thorny path among the vicious and degraded, or to some height of Zion's walls as watchman and ambassador, or to yon distant fields whitening for the coming reaper, Oh, be faithful, be diligent, be hopeful, be prayerful, humbly leaning upon the almighty arm; and then—God working in and through you, his the power and the glory,

yet yours a part of the toil, and yours the good servant's reward—you shall not disappoint the trust that the church commits to you with fears and tremblings; but when "the burden and heat" shall be past, the world shall be the better for your having lived in it, the church shall be better, heaven shall be happier, when its welcoming harps shall echo to your ear the Master's plaudit, "Well done!" "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

III.

Absalom;

OR,

THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE YOUNG MAN

"On streams of earthly love and joy,
On whose green banks we dwell,
Gleaming in beauty to the eye,
Ye promise fair and well.

"Ye lure us, and we venture in,
Cheated by sun and smiles;
Ye tempt us, and we brave your depths,
Won by your winning wiles.

"Too deep and strong for us! we glide
Down your deceiving wave,
Like men by siren songs beguiled,
On to a siren grave.

"O world, with all thy smiles and loves,
With all thy song and wine,
What mockery of human hearts,
What treachery is thine!

"O world, there's fever in thy touch,
And frenzy in thine eye;
To lose and shun thee is to live,
To win thee is to die."

CHAPTER III.

ABSALOM.

2 SAMUEL 13: 23-39; CHAPS. 14-18.

WE have viewed David as a young man. Perhaps, however, no portion of his career is clothed with a tenderer interest than that scene in which he appears as a *father*, when all the ardor of his affectionate nature bursts forth in passionate lamentation over a son who has long abused his love and disgraced his house, and who has now perished in the very act of high-handed treason: "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Can any thing be more touching than this spectacle of parental grief over one who by his course of life would seem to have forfeited all claim to compassion?

Yes, the world has witnessed a display of abused, yet continued parental love, that was more beautiful by far than even this; it was when God, who has "nourished and brought up children, and they rebelled" against him, stopping not with the sad wish, "Would I had died for thee," in the person of Jesus Christ, *did* die a human death for the sake of those who were engaged in a worse conspiracy than that of Absalom, as it was against a better Father and a more exalted government. When we look upon a scene like this, we may gather some faint conception of the great heart of the divine Parent, which so bewails and would relieve the miseries of his erring sons and daughters, and who has given such proof that, "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

The name Absalom signifies in He-

brew *the peace of his father*; but so far from verifying this title, he became a Benoni, or “son of sorrow,” to the heart that idolized him, and a sword of sharp contention to his father’s kingdom. Yet David’s experience in this respect, though bitter, is by no means uncommon. There are fathers to-day, and mothers, whose hairs, prematurely white, are being brought down in sorrow to the grave by the waywardness of those who once gave fair promise of cheering their declining years. Oh, heaven pity those who are thus stricken and wounded by the staff on which they had hoped to lean—stung by the life that they have nurtured with fond patience through weary years. Yet most of all are they to be commiserated who are so lost to all filial feeling, so deadened to every right principle and affection, that they can deal unmoved the blows under which the heart to which

they have been pressed so often and so tenderly, is slowly breaking, breaking to the grave.

Absalom as a youth combined in his person many prepossessing qualities, which won for him the popular admiration, and which, with all his faults, rendered him the idol of a doting father. Endowed with rare physical beauty, and with every grace of form and mien, brilliant of mind, courageous of heart, fascinating of address, he yet appears to have grown up intensely vain, selfish, unprincipled, the slave of his baser passions, and to crown all, the victim of the most unscrupulous ambition. We tremble for such a one when he enters the arena of active life, for we see in him vast elements of mischief, both to the world and to himself. Calculated by his winning, popular qualities to exert a leading influence over others, he is of all

men the most likely to undermine the public virtue and artfully to betray the best and holiest interests of society.

The history of this unworthy prince is brief, yet, as might have been expected from his traits of character, eventful. His first recorded crime was committed against his brother Amnon, who being older than himself, stood between him and the coveted succession to the throne. Under the pretext of avenging a dishonored sister, Absalom causes him to be slain by his servants at a family feast, and then flies for safety to his father-in-law, with whom he remains three years. At the expiration of this time, by a cunning artifice upon the part of Joab, he is restored to his former home, and two years later, to his forfeited favor at the court of David.

Who would have supposed that, under the fair show of filial love with which he

at length receives forgiveness from an injured father, there could beat so traitorous a heart? But soon his dark plottings begin to ripen into deeds. He suddenly assumes a more than royal state; his equipage and retinue, as he rides in public, eclipsing in magnificence those of the king his father, and dazzling all eyes by their ostentatious display. Nor does he stop with this. Having won to himself that vulgar admiration which is called forth by unaccustomed outward pomp, he next insinuates himself into the good graces of the people by an affected interest in their humblest affairs, and an apparently sincere desire for the administration of justice. The plot is deeply laid, and thus far all works well. The only thing needed to finish this picture of consummate villainy is a disguise of religion, and this he is not long in assuming. Under the pretext of paying

a religious vow, he repairs to Hebron, where, sustained by a formidable number of adherents, he is proclaimed king. At first the tide of events seems greatly in his favor; but soon Providence vindicates the rightful sovereign; the army of Absalom is defeated with a loss of twenty thousand men, and the traitor prince, fleeing for his life, is caught by his hair in an oak, where Joab kills him.

It was an appropriate close to such a career; and the death of Absalom affords one out of many illustrations with which history abounds of the untimely end in which a wicked ambition is likely to culminate.

Our subject, as suggested by the life and character of Absalom, is, THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE YOUNG MAN.

If, as we have already seen, religion makes its strongest appeals to the young, so also do vice and irreligion. The soul

of man, as long as it is in the body, is a disputed territory, that

“Keeps two worlds at strife :
Hell moves beneath to work its death,
Heaven stoops to give it life.”

Yet I think I see the invisible combatants gathering more closely about the youth than about any others. If there be good and evil spirits that “excel in strength,” veterans in the unseen warfare braver than the rest, who are commissioned to the most important points in the world-wide battle-field, they throng where young hearts are beating. And this not without good reason, for it is the point where character, habits, destiny, hang trembling in the balance; and the power that can gain the control of that formative period of life generally controls the whole, and decides its issues for eternity. At the same time there is that in the youthful nature which renders it

peculiarly susceptible, not only to right influences, but more especially to wrong ones. Yielding and impressible, it receives like wax whatever stamp is put upon it, and the good or evil habit formed when the heart is pliant, soon hardens into the shape that it shall wear through coming years. And then how much there is to which temptation may make its artful appeal. The natural appetite for pleasure in all its forms, the keen relish with which the youth greets the new world of joys opening to his view—none of them having yet palled upon his senses or revealed their hidden sting—his unsuspecting nature, his inexperience of worldly or Satanic wiles, his strong impulses and passions, and worse than all, his depraved, unregenerate heart, except it has been renewed by grace—that secret ally of the enemy without, which is too ready to betray the citadel within,

and throw open the gates to the foe—all combine in rendering the young man an object of peculiar interest to the powers of evil, a point for the concentration of their best forces, and the plying of their most cunning arts.

Now “to be forewarned is to be fore-armed,” and a knowledge of imminent peril is the first requisite in order to successfully guarding against it. It is with faint hopes of doing any good that we appeal to those who are grown old in sin. It is hard to turn them, wrecks that they are, from the current on which they have so long drifted; but we may well address the young, who are just spreading their sails to the breeze and launching forth from the harbor upon the unknown ocean, and may hopefully point such to their only chart, the Bible, to yon beacon lights that warn them of hidden dangers, to the reefs and shoals and

breakers that lie all along their route, and to the wrecked fragments floating around us, which, like Absalom in his death, admonish us how sadly may terminate the voyage that seems now so full of promise.

Our temptations are as varied as are our natural temperaments, tastes, and dispositions. The adversary not only draws from a full armory, but his weapons are in every instance adapted to his intended victim. He tempts David through the avenue of sensuality, Absalom through that of ambition, Judas through his covetousness, and Peter through his vain-glorying. In fact, whatever be the weak point in one's moral armor, Satan will find it out; and there, like Ahab, he is sure to be stabbed, except he is upon his guard.

I. Of these different classes of temptation, notice first those that appeal to one's LOWER NATURE, or to the bodily appetites and passions.

The chief failing of Absalom in this particular appears to have been that of personal vanity. He gloried in being the handsomest man in all Israel. Of commanding form and graceful bearing, he especially prided himself upon his long, beautiful hair, which he ostentatiously weighed whenever it was cut. Perhaps, in conformity to the fashion then prevalent in eastern courts, it was sprinkled with gold dust, further to enhance its splendor and increase its weight.

It is sufficient to say that the pride of a fine form or features belongs only to the weakest and most enervated minds. A temptation that is so effeminate, so utterly opposed not only to every thing

like manliness, but to every ordinary dictate of good sense, surely need not be dwelt upon at any length. It will be enough to remark, in passing, that as the pride of Absalom proved the halter that hung him between heaven and earth, and placed him in the power of his pursuer; so this kind of vanity is often the ruin of the soul that cherishes it, and generally makes its possessor the easy victim of the great destroyer.

And now how shall we speak of those other alluring paths of mere sensual indulgence that open upon every hand to the youthful pilgrim through this world? Satan stands at their entrance, in guise and manner a very "angel of light," whispering in soft tones of the roses, but never speaking of the thorns; bidding us listen to the ravishing music that comes floating through them, but drowning with his voice, like the Hindoo drum-

mers at a burial, the wails that arise as one and another stumbles and falls over the hidden brink. Oh, how artful are his blandishments, how cunning his suggestions! "God has formed you to be happy," he says with mock reverence. "You would not have been endowed with these varied appetites and passions, had he not meant that they be gratified. Away then with all idle scruples, and enter these inviting paths."

And in one respect he is right. God does intend that we be happy; but beware of the subtle logic with which he would ensnare you; nor for a moment accept his false conclusion, that pleasure is to be found in disobeying God and yielding the reins to brutish self-indulgence.

One of the most dangerous of these many alluring avenues that open out to the youth is that of *indolence* or sloth.

And what chiefly renders it pernicious is, not merely that it leads one away from the paths of delightful activity we were formed to tread, but that it is one from which branch forth all paths of vice and crime.

No mind furnishes so inviting a field for the tempter as one that is unoccupied. Indeed, it is probable that the luxurious indolence of the court of Israel, operating upon the ever busy, active mind of Absalom, first led the way to his ambitious projects. He could not be at rest, and his treacherous plottings were the natural consequences of his idleness. No mind, no heart, save that of the idiot, can be wholly vacant or at rest. If not employed in that which is good, or at the least harmless, a troop of evil thoughts and passions come rushing in and take possession. How much of vice and ruinous dissipation has its origin in the fact

that "time hangs heavy" on the idler's hand; and how many, in trying to kill time, in reality kill themselves! God pronounced more of a blessing than a curse in the decree, "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread;" and in even compulsory toil he has furnished us with one of the grandest safeguards against temptation.

There are few words from the lips of a youth that furnish so broad an invitation to the tempter as those too frequent ones, "I have nothing to do." They form the motto with which many a besotted wretch has set out upon his downward career, and might appropriately be inscribed as the epitaph upon the grave of the degraded drunkard, the infatuated gambler, the slave of lust and sensuality, and the high-handed criminal. "Nothing to do!" What, with that immortal mind to be trained and informed with truth and

wisdom ; with those exalted powers within you for whose improvement you are so soon to give account ; with those hands that are so strong for toil ; with that soul that shall live or die for ever ? “ Nothing to do ? ” Oh, say it not when thy brother is perishing ; when desolate hearts are waiting your kind mission to them ; when there are burdens to be lifted from the weary, and tears to be wiped from sorrow’s eye ! Be not a drone in God’s busy hive. The world, in these stirring days, has no room for such ; but make haste to fill your minds, your hands with blessed activities, that they may be proportionably emptied of sin and sorrow. And then see to it that your hours of leisure, when body or mind shall crave their rest, be hours of keenest watchfulness ; for then, if ever, the tempter is near and your soul is endangered.

Without stopping to notice all the re-

maining forms of temptation that belong to the class we are now considering, let us take as a fair type and sample of the rest, *intemperance*.

It was amid the drunken revelries of a feast, when Amnon his brother was merry with wine, that Absalom, stimulated to the deed no doubt by the intoxicating cup, caused his servants to murder him.

But it is in no such light as this that the tempter appeals to the giddy youth. "Only once," says the siren voice; and the red wine sparkles and dances as if it were the very spirit of life; "it will cheer your heart, or quicken your brain, or drown your sorrows." "Be a man," shouts his comrade; and he points to one and another in high circles, and says it is respectable or fashionable to drink.

Oh, what an eventful moment, when the youth pauses with the cup in his

trembling hand, scarcely resolute enough to say *no*, scarcely willing to say *yes*. It has doubtless been with unnumbered multitudes the turning-point of their endless destiny. Does he yield? A new and strange sensation of pleasure steals all through his frame, and he asks if this is the enemy he had been so taught to fear. Do we warn him of the hidden danger? He deems it an insult to his manliness to be reminded that others, strong and brave as he, have fallen before this tyrant; and he deliberately adds link after link to the chain of habit that is fast binding him down; until, his mind clouded, his will enervated, his heart besotted, his purest affections deadened and polluted, he lies fettered hand and foot, the abject slave of his destroyer. Now and then a gleam of reason, or the faint voice of conscience, startles him from his brutish degradation, and he

feebly resolves to throw off the bondage ; but he lacks the moral force to do so, and the tempter who had once so flattered his strength, now laughs at his weakness, and leads him whithersoever he will. Once a man, he is now but little removed from the beasts that perish ; once a useful, prominent member of society, he is now a disgrace to his friends and humanity ; once favored with religious influences and impressions, he is hardened against every holy influence, is ripe for crime, ripe for shame, ripe for perdition. Who could have supposed that the sun that rose in such clear, strong beauty, would, ere it reached its zenith, go down in such a night—that a life so lovely in its budding promise could yield such bitter fruit ? Better for such had they never been born, for the world is full of heavy-hearted Rachels, weeping and refusing to be comforted for their children

who have perished by this worse massacre than that of Bethlehem; and full of mourning Davids bending over drunkards' graves with the cry, "Would God I had died for thee, O my son, my son!" And the voice that comes to all from the depths to which the wretched inebriate has sunk himself is this: "Avoid, as you would a plague, this fearful destroyer of peace and purity, of health and life, of body and soul; and as you value character, happiness, and the approval of God or man, 'Look not upon the wine when it is red.'"

"Look not upon the wine, O thoughtless one,
While you have gifts that it may steal away;
Youth, grace, and wit and genius, now your own,
Are all too precious for the spoiler's prey.

"The love of kindred and the joy of friends
Around you cling, as to the oak the vine;
To every circle light your presence lends:
Oh, look not on the soul-destroying wine!

“Leave to the dull, the ignoble, and the slave
 A joy so base, a strife with such a foe ;
 Whom to o’ercome no honor brings the brave,
 To fall by whom were triple shame and woe.”

II. But some there are who, by reason of their confirmed good habits, tastes, or principles, deem themselves proof against these lower and more sensual allurements. Yet Satan has a snare for every foot, and a song for every ear. He has his appeals to our HIGHER NATURE—to what may be called the more refined and exalted instincts of the mind.

Prominent among these is the one so plainly indicated by our subject, *ambition*. Youth is peculiarly the season of high aims and exalted anticipations ; and these are not by any means to be repressed, but rather to be guided to right ends. They are to a man’s whole nature what steam is to the engine, a motive power, that if ill regulated may lead to disaster

and ruin, but which properly controlled and guided will accomplish the most beneficent results.

This cannot better be illustrated than in the opposite careers of two brothers, the sons of a king. With the one, this principle was a consuming eagerness for power, and that for its own sake merely, and gained by whatever means; with the other, it was the commendable desire to *make the best use* of power, holding it simply as a means to a higher end, the glory of God and the good of men. With one, no music was so sweet as the voice of popular applause, secured by whatever sacrifice; the other, while by no means indifferent to public opinion, as none should be, aspired to the favor of God as the supremest good. With the one, ambition was a dark, malignant passion that overmastered his whole being, and as if with demoniac power, hurled

him into the commission of crime, and would have waded through seas of blood to its fulfilment; with the other, it was a noble aspiration, chastened by piety and lofty impulse, that conducted him to rare heights of wisdom and blessedness. While—most instructive contrast of all—with Absalom it defeated its own end and hastened him to a dishonored grave, with Solomon it not only attained its worthy purposes, but gained with them all the glory that the most ambitious spirit could have desired.

Few classes of temptation possess such a dangerous fascination as this one. Appealing at the outset to the native, innocent aspirations of the youthful mind, it slyly feeds and flatters them, until they gnaw with a fierce hunger, that the more it is fed, craves all the more. He who surrenders himself to its sway will find it the most exacting of taskmasters,

whose demands upon character and principle will have no end, until they have sapped every virtue of his heart and mildewed all his joys. The incense of the public idolatry is often bought with the costly price of all that a man should hold most dear; nay, frequently with no less a sacrifice than himself, laid body and soul, a "whole burnt-offering," upon the altar of this insatiate Moloch.

Its appeals to the youth of this day are many and varied; but whether it take the form of unprincipled political aspiration, as with an Absalom, an Arnold, or a Burr, degrading one from a man into an intriguing demagogue, and from a patriot into a traitor; or that of mammon-worship, with its strong temptations to dishonest aggrandizement, and to the gambler's coinage of heart's blood into gold, that men may say, "How rich he is;" or that of the pride of intellect,

with its affectation of superior wisdom, whose very parade best proves its folly: in short, whatever be the shape in which the temptation comes, shake off unsanctified ambition as you would a viper, and when tempted to barter immortal interests for a breath of fame, say with all the might that God has given you, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

To this day there may be seen just without the gates of Jerusalem a heap of stones, which mark the supposed grave of the traitor Absalom; and every troop of passing travellers stop to hurl upon it their indignant tribute to the memory of an ungrateful son. Truly, "pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." "The name of the wicked shall rot, but the righteous shall be held in everlasting remembrance."

III. A third class of temptations relate directly to the SPIRITUAL AND ETERNAL CONCERNS of the young man.

When Absalom's treachery was ripe, he desired permission of his father to go to Hebron, offering as his pretext, "Thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the Lord shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the Lord." Whether the vow had really been made or not, his words sufficiently express an intention that is no doubt sooner or later formed in every youthful mind, "I will serve the Lord." But alas, it is no sooner formed than Satan whispers, "Yes, religion is a good thing; you must possess it: but there is time enough yet for that. Put it off; you will be better able to attend to it by and by." And then he plies his arts more vigorously, and rivets his chains more tightly than ever. With each suc-

ceeding day and year it becomes harder to shake them off, and easier to postpone repentance, until the fatal procrastination has become a settled habit of the soul that he cannot conquer. His repeated purposes of piety, being as often broken, only confirm him in sin, and the heart, fed with such frequent promises, becomes indifferent to the reality. Thus the blessing that had once seemed to be so near, recedes farther and farther from his feeble, irresolute grasp, and the grieved Spirit of God takes his eternal flight; and only when "the harvest is past and the summer is ended," does the giddy trifler awake to behold the miserable cheat to which he has fallen a victim. Alas that in this world of death, with his companions falling like autumn leaves around him, with eternity and the dread judgment-day so close at hand, the heir of immortality can be beguiled into such

a surrender of his dearest and eternal interests! Procrastination in temporal things is a dire evil, for it is "the thief of time;" but in things spiritual it becomes far worse, for then it is the thief of eternity. "Put it off?" No, a thousand times no. Rather be every other joy postponed and every other purpose broken, than defer for a day or an hour the paramount claims of God and Christ and heaven. This is the rock on which more souls have perished than upon any other. Let us be warned by their miserable fate.

There are numerous other temptations that assail with peculiar power the youth who is intent upon salvation. The fear of ridicule is Satan's snare for some timid souls in whose ears the voice of human praise or blame sounds louder than that of the Lord of all. The love of ease deters another from his highest good, and

he clings to the burden of his guilt and doom because he thinks—mistaken soul!—that it is lighter than the cross. Another, yielding to his destroyer a fuller confidence than he gives to the God of truth, believes those lies by which religion is defamed; as that it is gloomy, joyless, and a mere system of harsh constraints. With others the tempter erects out of their amiable virtues a barrier to piety, and by flattering them with the thought that they are good enough already, converts their very morality into an obstacle to conversion. But whatever be the plea of this devourer of souls in any individual instance, well do we know that, as with the one from whom our Saviour cast out the devil, he will not permit any to become the easy subjects of grace, but will, at the very sight of Jesus, try every expedient to hinder them from coming to him to be saved.

Where then is the young man's resource? First of all, and in respect to every phase of temptation, let the soul be ever upon its guard against the least act of yielding. Both reason and experience teach us that it is easier to refrain from the first oath, the first glass, the first gratification of lust or passion, than afterwards to retrace the wrong step thus taken—far easier, nobler, happier, to fly from the first temptation, than to conquer a settled habit that has seized upon body and soul with its merciless fangs, and is fast destroying them.

Tradition tells us of a great rock upon some southern island, by virtue of whose magnetic qualities the ship that ventured within the circle of its influence would be impelled towards it with greater and greater swiftness, until, every bolt and bar being drawn forth by its invisible power, the whole would fall to pieces at

its base. There are many such rocks in life's great sea—rocks of temptation that have power to loosen every moral fastening which is not secured by the strong principles of piety, and to dash to a hopeless wreck the soul that dallies with them. The only safety is in giving them a wide berth, and with firm hand steering clear of their outermost verge of attraction.

Let there also be a guard upon the inmost heart, keeping it "with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." The thoughts are the sentinels that keep the avenues to the whole being, and every thing depends upon their fidelity. The youth should have a care lest they prove worse traitors to him than was Absalom to his king; for when Satan can bribe them into parleying with him, we may well tremble for the citadel.

The one grand, all-inclusive safeguard

of the youth or man against so subtle a foe is personal piety. Let there be Christ's truth in the mind, his love and grace in the heart, his strong hand fast in ours, and his crown of reward held over us from the skies: with these none can fail; without these none can succeed. For in that Christ "hath suffered, being tempted," and hath resisted louder appeals of pride, ambition, indulgence, than have ever addressed his followers, "he is able to succor them that are tempted." Go forth then in his armor, with the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against thee. Then shalt thou conquer, and shalt fulfil a nobler ambition than that of Absalom, as thou dost aspire to a grander kingdom, even the one "prepared for thee from the foundation

of the world." And well may that soul afford to dispense with all lesser aims, and repel all baser motives, to whom the voice of the King declares, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."





IV.

Daniel;

OR,

THE SAFEGUARDS OF THE YOUNG MAN

“UP for thy life, young soul,
Foes gather round thee fast;
Up, for the swift hours roll
Thy favored season past.
Now thou art strong, gird for the fight;
Decay ere long shall waste thy might.

Mark how, from realms above,
The Spirit o'er thee bends;
Gift of the Saviour's love,
Him God the Father sends:
He leads secure; his sword and shield
Make victory sure—make Satan yield.

God and his saints invite;
Hell warns with dreadful voice;
Life, death, all things unite
To press thy timely choice.
List to that call. On Jesus' side
Trust now thine all; in him abide.”

CHAPTER IV.

DANIEL.

DANIEL, CHAPS. 1, 2, 6.

IN our last chapter we traced the sad career of an unprincipled youth, who, yielding the reins to pride and ambition, fell before the tempter, and sank, in the prime of his manhood, into a dishonored grave.

In beautiful contrast to the misguided Absalom stands out upon the page of sacred history another youth, reared like him amid the corruptions of a royal palace ; yet, unlike the son of David, surrounded by idolaters, and exposed to those peculiar trials of virtue and morality which could only be found in the luxurious court of the king of Babylon. But though having little if any outward incen-

tive to piety, and every conceivable allurements to sin, and even to a denial of the faith of his fathers, we find him maintaining through a long life his unbending integrity of character—which, the more it is tried, shines all the more conspicuously—and leaving his name embalmed among the most beloved and honored of the earth.

If the career of Absalom stands out like a warning beacon-light to the youthful traveller over life's treacherous sea, the pure life of DANIEL, which we are now to consider, sketched by the divine finger upon our chart the Bible, indicates our only safe route through the temptations of this world to God. We have noticed the perils of the youth, as illustrated by the melancholy biography of the one ; let us now look from these to his SAFEGUARDS, as exhibited in the course of the other.

These may be regarded as of a two-fold character, as they pertain to the intellectual and the moral parts of our nature, or to the successful culture of the mind and the heart.

I. It is to be remarked that, as with Joseph, David, Solomon, Paul, and all others whose names have become identified with the highest usefulness and honor among men, so Daniel, even while young in years, aspired to the ripest and most mature wisdom. A captive boy, separated from friends and kindred and native land, he was one of the four chosen out of all the children of Judah to enter the royal household, and to be prepared, by careful training in the Chaldean language and literature, for the king's service. Here was indeed a trial from which the youthful foreigner might well have shrunk in dismay ; for, whatever might have

been his natural aptitude or his acquired Hebrew learning, yet in the midst of so many able native competitors, nothing but the utmost labor could enable him to acquit himself with credit, much less with any thing like distinction, in the peculiar departments of Babylonish science. Yet, with that fidelity which was so marked a feature of his character, he applied himself at once to his tasks; and his painstaking diligence, as is ever the case, was so well rewarded, that when, after three years of study, the day of public trial arrived, it proved that "in all matters of wisdom and understanding that the king inquired of" Daniel and his three Hebrew companions, "he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in his realm." And in this wisdom, gained as it must have been with much self-denying application and an avoidance of many youthful indul-

gences, lay in a great measure the basis of Daniel's career of greatness.

Need we say that the same principle holds good at this day? There is in every youthful brain a precious mine, whose treasure, now hidden, waits to reward the diligent workman, and "the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold." This mine may exist in equal richness in any two youths as they set out upon their career of life, and yet the one may die a wise, useful, honored man, and the other may die a comparative fool; just as of two rough blocks of Parian marble in the same quarry, one may be made a splendid triumph of the sculptor's art, a form of grace and beauty; and the other, turned to baser purposes, may be trodden under foot of men. Here you will see the chief difference between the wise and the ignorant—between a New-

ton and an unlettered idler, staring with vacant wonder upon him and his telescope : the one had diligently worked the inner mine of thought, and fused the rich gold in the fires of self-discipline, and stamped it with the seal of consecration to a noble purpose, and thrown away the rubbish ; the other, scarcely realizing that he had a mind, and conscious only of a body that had to be fed and clothed and warmed, had become gradually indifferent to his higher and immortal powers, and the world was none the wiser, and he himself was scarce the wiser, for their existence.

Now the mind of every youth is a solemn trust, to be improved, like every thing else that we possess, for God and humanity. It matters not whether it be strong or weak ; whether gifted with the varied powers of genius or with a single talent ; or whether placed in circumstan-

ces favorable or unfavorable to its highest culture : in the Divine judgment, the possessor of one talent is just as accountable as he who has ten ; and it is no less the duty of the mechanic or the clerk to improve his mind, so far as he may within his allotted sphere, than of the student in college halls or the candidate for professional learning. His duty, do we say ? The honored names of Franklin, Sherman, and hosts of others, who have struggled up from obscure poverty, and become like Daniel the counsellors of state ; the names of Luther, Bunyan, and other bright and burning lights in the church's history, remind us that no station is so low, no obstacle so vast, but that he who makes a right use and improvement of his mental powers may yet rise to positions of high usefulness if not of renown.

And by this improvement I do not mean the mere acquisition of knowledge,

the storing of the mind with facts, but also that mental discipline, those habits of thought, reflection, and observation, which make one not only intelligent, but practically wise. One's mind may be a very storehouse of erudition, as his barns may be filled with grain, but neither the one nor the other will benefit mind or body, except it be used, digested, and assimilated ; and as the food, by this process, contributes to physical strength and health, so the mental aliment should be made conducive to that wisdom which is the true healthful working of the mind.

In this will be found one of the strongest safeguards against temptation. "Keep sound wisdom and discretion," says the wise man ; "then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble." The cultivated mind resembles the cultivated field, where the good and the useful crowd out the worthless and the

poisonous. But more than this, the love of knowledge, being itself one of the higher instincts of our nature, is apt to elevate the soul above the baser passions, and to lead us on to purer and more innocent sources of gratification. It opens out to the view a world of wholesome delights, from which one will not be likely to turn aside to the gaming-table or the drinking-saloon. It admits us to the society of the great and good in past and present ages, whose profitable converse will leave but little relish for the company of the vicious and the profligate.

And the youth, while thus gathering to himself an armor against many kinds of temptation, will at the same time be girding himself for life's duties. In this age of the world, and especially in this country, very much depends upon the *intelligence* as well as upon the virtue of young men ; and in the race after dis-

tion, usefulness, or true excellence of character, the tribunal of public opinion, like the court of Babylon, adjudges its highest prizes to wisdom. Never was there a time so marked by the activity and triumph of cultivated intellect. In every sphere of society, every branch of human occupation, there is a pressing demand for the highest degree of knowledge and intelligence. The trial of Daniel before the king and sages of the realm is sooner or later reenacted in the case of every youth, as society takes the measure of his attainments, and promotes him to that honor which is the reward of wisdom, or leaves him to that "shame" which is "the promotion of fools."

But another and severer ordeal approaches, when He who has entrusted to us these immortal minds for his glory and the good of man, shall say, "Give an account of thy stewardship." Thrice

blessed then the "good and faithful servant," who, having improved his gifts to the attainment of heavenly wisdom, can say, "Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold, I have gained beside them five talents more." Thrice wretched then the slothful one who, in his grovelling self-debasement, has "digged in the earth and hid his Lord's money;" for the "unprofitable servant" shall be cast into "outer darkness."

If you aspire to worthy ends by worthy means, if you would vindicate your manhood, make your life a blessing, and gain the approval of God and man, let not that glorious mind slumber within you, but awaken it to its life-work. Give it food, that it may grow and live; give it drink from the heavenly fountain; give it the exercise and discipline that shall gird it for duty, and start it resolutely upon the upward course. As its race is to be

eternal, see to it that it receive now the right direction, so that long ages after the body has mouldered into dust, it shall be found still seeking and gaining new heights of wisdom as it for ever approaches that only point which it may not aspire to reach—the mind of the Infinite.

II. The second and more important class of youthful safeguards and preparations for duty, are those that pertain to the heart, or to our MORAL TRAITS and qualities.

Of these none are more conspicuously illustrated by our subject than *moral courage*.

No sooner was Daniel introduced to the Babylonish court than his conscientious piety was exposed to a severe test. The king had appointed for the three Hebrew youths a rich and generous diet, sim-

ilar to his own, with a view to their being well nourished and strengthened in body, while their minds were educated for his service. But in this food there would naturally be much that was strictly forbidden in the Jewish law, which not only prohibited many articles of diet that were used by the heathen nations, but also required that the kinds of flesh which were allowed should be killed in a certain manner. Besides this, the young Hebrew was in danger of eating food that had been offered, after the ancient usage, to idols, which circumstance might seem to identify him with their false religion and worship.

It is difficult for us, who enjoy the larger liberties of the Christian era, to enter fully into the convictions of the ancient Jew upon a matter like this; it is enough that to one who honored the divine law, it was no trifling thing. A

mind of less resolution than Daniel's might have hesitated long before insisting, at such a place and under such circumstances, upon these peculiarities of religion; but not so with him. The true moral hero requires only a clear sense of duty in order to discharge it bravely, and without fear of consequences. This Daniel had, and he instantly "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank," and he ventured, mere boy that he was, to communicate his decision, with all due respect, to Ashpenaz the prince. He who dares to do right has God upon his side. And the youth pleaded not alone; for He who turneth all hearts as the rivers of water are turned, seconded his suit, and crowned it with success, by giving him favor and tender love with the prince, who granted his request, and

allotted to the four Hebrews "pulse to eat, and water to drink," as the result of which temperate diet their countenances soon "appeared fairer than all the children which did eat the king's meat."

Thus early in life was developed and put in practice that moral courage, that firm unyielding adherence to known duty, which sustained this man of God amid all the corruptions and temptations of a wicked court, which no voice of pride or ambition, no sneers of ridicule, no flattery of his king, who loaded him with honors, no devices of his envious foes could for a moment overcome. Animated by this, he dared, as a faithful prophet, to rebuke king Nebuchadnezzar for his pride, and to stand before the prouder Belshazzar with the words, "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting;" and for three successive

dynasties, while occupying stations of high authority under each, fearlessly to profess the faith of his fathers, and to acknowledge Jehovah in the midst of heathenish idolatries.

The most striking exhibition of this trait, however, occurred towards the close of his life. A man like Daniel could scarcely have hoped to remain unassailed by that mean, ignoble spirit of *jealousy* which the spectacle of virtue, when conjoined with success, always engenders in base minds. Having been promoted by Darius above the one hundred and twenty princes of the realm, and thus placed next to the throne itself, he naturally became a shining mark for the shafts of envy and detraction. Well has it been said, "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before *envy*?" Such, however, was his integrity of character, and his fidelity in the

administration of the government, that a hundred keen observers—their vision sharpened by the spirit of ambitious rivalry—could find in him no flaw. There was but one resource left them, and then said these men, “We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.” Approaching the king with artful flattery, they procure a decree which forbids prayer for thirty days to any other than Darius, under penalty of being cast into a den of lions. The conspiracy is well laid, and now the prophet must either prove recreant to his Hebrew faith, and dishonor the God of Israel, or else, as they apprehend, die a death of violence and ignominy, and so be removed out of their way.

Seldom has piety been put to so severe a test, and never has it stood the trial more courageously, or issued from it

more triumphantly. With the exception of some passages in the life of Jesus, there is scarcely any thing more sublime upon the page of human history, in view of all the circumstances, than the simple statement, "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." While making no unnecessary parade of his devotions, he at the same time abated them not one jot or tittle, nor took any pains to conceal them, though conscious that, to all human appearance, his every word of prayer to God was the pronouncing of his own death warrant.

Mark the result. The decree was irrevocable. The king, much as he commiserated Daniel, had no power to repeal

it—the faithful prophet was cast into the den of lions. But the Creator is master of the most savage of his creatures, and the prayer of the man of God has power to enlist upon his side those mighty invisible spirits that are “sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation.” Thus while the king passes a troubled, sleepless night in his palace, the gloomy den is made beautiful and pleasant by the presence of an angel of the Lord, who stops the mouths of the lions; and in the morning God’s servant comes forth unharmed, and his persecutors perish by the very death they had plotted against him, affording one of the many verifications of the proverb, “The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead;” signally illustrating both the power and the safety of right principles, and the sure tendency of envy and malice to defeat their own ends.

But especially do we here see exhibited the nature and value of true moral courage, which, rooted in an invincible faith in God and in the right, and looking only at present duty and the approval of the Judge of all, makes a man as adamant against temptation, carries him over every obstacle, and renders him superior to every fear, except the fear of sinning. Possessed of this, the youth or man is strong for duty, and stronger yet for trial; destitute of this, he is the feeble, unresisting slave of himself and others, the sport of every gale of passion, and of every allurements to evil, and is ripe for disgrace and ruin. It may be taken for granted that every right principle which we possess must, sooner or later, have its *trial*, which shall issue either in its greater strength, or in its overthrow. None can escape the ordeal, neither can any evade in any in-

stance its consequences either of victory or inglorious defeat. He who has not already passed it, must look forward to encountering the first slur against his piety or integrity, the first temptation to dishonesty or untruthfulness, the first whisper of unjust calumny or malice, the first beguilement to a letting down of principle and a compromise with wrong. Happy will it be for those in whom, as in Daniel, men can find none other fault than that which is the highest virtue—a supreme devotedness to the law and will of their Creator.

There are several things that enter into the trait we are now considering, and go to render it a grand safeguard for the young man.

Of these, one of the most important is the possession of *settled principles of action*, which shall serve as an invariable law to the mind and will, and furnish a

universal rule of conduct. They form the anchors to character which, moored in the depths of eternal truth and right, maintain in unyielding firmness the soul that cherishes them. And they constitute the chief difference between the moral hero and the slave to vice and sin—between a Daniel and an Absalom; the one being governed by those fixed laws which alone are adapted to an immortal being, the other being at the mercy of every passion and propensity of his corrupt heart. For no principles can be considered well established which are not stronger than our passions, and which do not bring the lower part of our nature into subjection to the higher. Without these a man can no more be brave for duty, than a soldier can be courageous on the battle-field when his heart is in league with the enemy and his hands are destitute of weapons.

And what good principles are to the heart, the same is a *lofty purpose* to the life. But few, if any, have ever attained a high degree of excellence or usefulness whose early years were *aimless*. The man who lives and acts without a settled plan, his views bounded by the passing hour or day, and with no bright goal in view whose prospect shall quicken his footsteps, will be weak, vacillating, and irresolute, and likely to fall a ready prey to the first onset of temptation. Then let every youth aspire to be something, to do something good and noble in his career through life. A single worthy end, carefully considered at the outset, and then tenaciously adhered to, furnishes of itself an element of surpassing strength. And of all the aims that can be placed before the human mind, where is there one so truly grand and commanding as that with which Dan-

iel was animated—the glory of our Maker?

The youth thus fortified with good principles, and led on by a high and holy purpose, has need to be *decided* in acting upon the one and gaining the other. Many a poor combatant in the life warfare has bit the dust because of his indecision; for oftentimes to hesitate before the tempter is to yield and fall; and in all cases the more speedy and determined our resistance, the more rapid and complete will be our victory. Who can help admiring this quality in the persecuted man of God, as he kneels in his chamber towards Jerusalem, and calmly braves the fatal decree of the heathen king, rather than surrender a principle which is right, or disobey his Maker?

Yet, after all, the grand secret of Daniel's fearless adherence to the right is to be found in a firm *faith in God*—in God's

word as the highest truth, in his providence as the best protection, in his love as the supremest blessedness. Ah, here we behold the spring, not only of Daniel's marvellous courage, but of that which has animated all prophets, apostles, martyrs, and given them their victories. It enabled Stephen to preach the truth to his murderers; it put into Paul's mouth those brave words, "I am now ready to be offered;" it inspired Luther with the undaunted reply to the threats of his enemies, "Had I five heads, I would lose them all rather than retract the testimony I have borne for Christ;" and again, when threatened with the fate of John Huss, "Were they to make a fire that would extend from Worms to Wittemberg, and reach even to the sky, I would walk across it in the name of the Lord." Truly said the prophet, "The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits."

Ah, ye who stand timorously upon the threshold of great duties, scarce venturing to go forward, because, as with Bunyan's pilgrim, there are "lions in the way," while yet conscience permits you not to go back, know that here is a principle that can endue you with a more than earthly valor, and carry you on triumphantly through every opposing danger. Have faith in God through Christ, and you are unconquerable; for then you toil not, battle not alone, but "God worketh in you," and as Darius said to Daniel, "The Lord whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee." Only have faith in God, and a divine impulse shall be given to all your powers, that shall bear you, as on angels' wings, along the heights of holy consecration. Then no danger shall appall you, no snare beguile, no voice of scorn or malice disturb your calm composure or divert your

course. Oh, in that faith be brave, bent ever upon duty; for duty is yours, and results belong to God. Have courage to frown upon the wrong, and though it be almost single-handed, to maintain and defend the right and the true—courage to obey the voice of conscience and of God, and to stand in your place a tower of moral strength, fearless, undaunted, impregnable to assaults of earth or hell.

“Be brave, my brother;
Fight the good fight of faith
With weapons proved and true;
Be faithful and unshrinking to the death;
Thy God will bear thee through.”

III. Our subject suggests as another of the youth's great safeguards, THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. Of these Daniel was not merely a casual reader, but a diligent student; and no doubt much of his excellence of character may be attributed to an early

observance of the Psalmist's prescription, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word."

This is emphatically the divinely appointed security for the young, and none are either safe or happy who neglect its precious pages. No weapon is so sharp and powerful against temptation as the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." No earth-born rays can so illumine our way through the darkness as this "lamp to our feet," this "light to our path." Do we seek for wisdom? Here it exists in its highest perfection. Or for good principles? This is the storehouse from whence alone they may be gathered. Or for moral courage? Here we may best learn its nature and its triumphs. Or for high aims in life? The word paints before us the sublimest ends that it is possible for man to aspire

to, even glory, honor, and immortality beyond the grave.

It would be hard to conceive of any situation more hopelessly sad, or more fraught with extremest peril, than that of the youth who turns his back upon this volume of heavenly truth. He is like a ship speeding at random over a dangerous sea without either chart or compass; like a traveller lost in an unknown country, with perils upon every hand, who has neither guide nor guide-book. Neglect the Bible, and you stumble in a dark path, filled with snares and pitfalls, and ending shortly in the "blackness of darkness for ever." Read it, study it; and lo, the night becomes light about you, and endless glory opens on your view. Who will be content to walk in darkness when he may have the blessed light of life shining around him and within him?

Slight not this neglected book—this

voice of infinite love to the weak, wandering soul. Take it down from the shelf where it lies neglected, wipe off the dust, and open thy heart to its gladdening beams. Perhaps it is the gift of a mother's love, and has been bedewed with her tears of anxiety for her darling boy; or it embalms the memory of some friend to your soul, whose prayers are still unanswered. Of this at least we may be certain: it is all radiant and glowing with the love of the Father in heaven, and of Jesus the Saviour, whose message to you is, "They that seek me early shall find me."

IV. The last and crowning safeguard of the young man is PRAYER. We look with astonishment upon the calm devotions of the man of God as he kneels in his chamber towards Jerusalem, in the face of the king's fatal decree; yet, after all,

it was only because he prayed, that he was able to do it so fearlessly. There is a power in this agency that no mind of man can measure. One may be weak and inexperienced, encompassed by the most appalling dangers, and no human arm or voice be nigh to befriend him; it matters not: in the still communion of the heart with God strength is sure to come, and the earnest cry for help summons the very might of Omnipotence to the suppliant's side, gives him the victory, and arms him for fresh conflicts. And will any in this world, where dangers cluster upon every side, and all the arts of Satan beset the unwary pilgrim, refuse to grasp, by the prayer of faith, the outstretched arm of God, which alone can save him? Oh, with that soul within you, more precious than all worlds, a soul that is to be saved or lost—with the pit yawning before you, and an un-

seen power drawing you stealthily towards it—with heaven, bright heaven, alluring you with its angel voices to everlasting joys, “pleasures for evermore,” and God above “waiting to be gracious,” be persuaded now to fly to the throne of grace ere you be driven from the throne of judgment. Arise and go to thy Father, and say unto him, “Father, I have sinned,” and by earnest supplication make God himself your safeguard, your strength, and your salvation. To this he tenderly invites you, asking every youth the solemn question—Oh, heed it well and answer it speedily—“Wilt thou not from this time say unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?”

V.

The Young Ruler;

OR,

ONE THING NEEDFUL.

WHY haltest thou, deluded heart?

Why waverest longer in thy choice?

Is it so hard to choose the part

Offered by heaven's entreating voice?

Oh look with clearer eyes again,

Nor strive to enter in in vain.

Press on.

Let not the body dull the soul:

Its weakness, fears, and sloth despise.

Man toils, and roams from pole to pole

To gain some fleeting earthly prize;

The highest good he little cares

To win, or striving, soon despairs.

Press on.

Oh help each other, hasten on;

Behold, the goal is nigh at hand;

Soon shall the battle-field be won,

Soon shall your King before you stand.

To calmest rest He leads you now,

And sets His crown upon your brow.

Press on.

CHAPTER V.

THE YOUNG RULER.

MATTHEW 19:16-22; MARK 10:17-22; LUKE 18:18-23.

THE gospel narrative, while it is based upon the most striking and impressive realities, may yet be viewed as a kind of representative panorama. Here every variety of human character and condition, painted from real life, is subjected to the strong light of Christianity, and made to pass in instructive review before every generation of mankind. Whether we follow Nicodemus in his midnight visit to the great Teacher, or look in upon the guestchamber where the proud Pharisee and "the woman which was a sinner" appear in such striking contrast, or trace the career of a Judas, Paul, or

Peter, we find something more than mere history; we discover the foreshadowing of varied scenes, and the delineation of widely diverse characters that are reproduced in every age to the end of time. Thus in the incident which forms our present subject, we see exhibited upon the one hand a beautiful, and yet as it proves, defective type of moral excellence, and upon the other the mingled affection and anxiety with which its possessor is regarded by Christ.

A youth, running and kneeling to Jesus, asks, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" In reply, our Lord points him to the commandments of the moral law, but is met by the answer, "Master, all these have I observed from my youth." "Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give

to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me." Mark 10:17-22.

As the person here spoken of is said by Matthew to have been a young man, our Lord here appears peculiarly as the young man's Friend. With the exceptions of the family of Bethany and John "the disciple whom Jesus loved," this is the only instance in which any individual is expressly mentioned in the gospel as the subject of Christ's love. "Jesus beholding him, loved him." No doubt this circumstance may be chiefly attributed to the engaging qualities of the youthful ruler; yet may we not also infer that there was a peculiar charm in the freshness of his opening manhood, and in the noble impulses and warm affections which generally mark the young heart before it has become seared and hardened by long contact with the world?

Thus now as ever, the same Lord Jesus, beholding those whose early years are adorned with the graces of virtue and morality, and especially those who aspire ardently after eternal life, loves them, even while his voice of affectionate solicitude declares to such as are destitute of the crowning grace of piety, "One thing thou lackest."

We read of this young man that he came running, and kneeled to Christ, and asked him, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Although "he had great possessions," he was yet poor in this: he had no heavenly hope. His riches were all bounded by the world and time; they were only "treasures upon earth," corruptible and perishing. Yet in this very inquiry he confessed both his dissatisfaction with them, and his intense yearnings of soul after the true and enduring riches.

Our Lord, then as now, loved to be inquired of by sinners in reference to their eternal interests, and he answered him with that kind fidelity which the occasion required. Detecting at a glance the true situation of the youthful suppliant, he probes with a master-hand his eager yet blinded heart, and points him first of all to the moral law. Why did he do this? Do we not read that "by the deeds of the law no man living shall be justified?" Ah, his words, "Thou knowest the commandments," were meant to be like the surgeon's knife, which, by touching the diseased part, should reveal the malady; for it is also true, that "by the law is the knowledge of sin." He would first convict him of guilt and ruin, that he might thus be brought through the narrow gateway of a lowly penitence to the gospel of life and peace. But the young man at once replies with evident sincer-

ity, "All these things have I kept from my youth up."

These words give us the clue to his character and life. Let us now endeavor to analyze them, noticing both what was commendable and what was defective therein to the view of Christ.

There was *much that was worthy of commendation*; and in this respect the young ruler was the type of a large class who are to be found in every Christian community.

He was no doubt the child of pious parents, by whom he had been religiously educated, receiving every advantage which the Jewish schools and synagogues afforded. Upright and conscientious, he made God's law the rule of his conduct, and scrupulously observed his Sabbaths and ordinances. With the most painstaking diligence he endeavored to avoid

the appearance of evil, and to live up to all the requirements of an exalted morality. What were his strugglings with temptation, his wrestlings with the world and the flesh, in his earlier years, we know not. The result only is before us—a character so adorned with lovely traits and virtues as to have won the esteem and confidence of the community, and promoted him, while a comparative youth, to the chief office in the synagogue. Nor was this all; the beauty of his earnest morality attracted the regard even of the Lord Jesus himself, who “beholding him, loved him.”

Are there not multitudes now living who answer to this portraiture? Yes; and they are the hope of the church and the world. We meet them in almost every Christian household, in the Sabbath-school and sanctuary—the young, gifted, and amiable, whose lives are con-

spicuous for their virtues, and beautiful for their unswerving fidelity to every trust reposed in them. There is something indescribably attractive in the spectacle of a youth thus rising superior to the promptings of the world and sin, who nobly dares to plant his footsteps in virtue's paths, and nobly strives to win the prize of moral excellence, and in whom the generous impulses and warm affections of early life are seen to be consecrated by a dutiful obedience to law and a patient self-discipline. Such a one answers to the poet's description:

"His life was gentle, and the elements
So mixed in him, that nature might stand up
And say to all the world, Behold a man!"

But the best feature of all in the character of the young ruler was this: he sought eternal life. His aims were not wounded by time, if his possessions were. They overleaped the grave, and aspired

to a crown of glory, honor, and immortality beyond. Indeed, in the earnestness of his desire after the heavenly portion, he could not refrain from "running" to meet Jesus, and falling at his feet, as he cried out, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

Are there not many who answer, in some degree at least, to this description, and who, if they share not in the ardor of this youthful suppliant, do still desire sincerely that they may be saved? They perhaps postpone the earnest effort, while yet not yielding up the aspiration after life. They hear an inward voice that whispers to their secret souls of things unseen and eternal, of a better portion, a brighter hope, and more exalted destiny than this poor world can give; while yet their ideas upon the subject may be as vague and ill-defined as those of the ruler who asked, "What good thing

shall I do that I may inherit eternal life ?”

Now in this class of persons who, in comparative uprightness and sincerity, are blindly feeling after God and heaven, we may well believe that our Saviour is deeply interested. He looks upon them with tenderest compassion and love, and longs to impart to them the gift that they desire.

So too the church “beholding them, loves them.” She regards them as perhaps very near to the kingdom of God—as almost Christians ; and the very virtues that adorn their lives inspire the ardent wish that they may be “not only almost, but altogether” the disciples of Christ. Yes, it is to these, the religiously educated, whose minds are so well informed in Bible truth, and whose consciences, by careful nurture, are become quick to discern good and evil—to these,

the tender trees that have been planted in the house of the Lord, that have been watered with precious heavenly influences, and for many a year favored with such varied moral culture—it is to these that the church now looks, in the hope and prayer that their budding promise of good may be made to issue in those fruits which alone are pleasing to the Lord of the vineyard. To them she looks for the fulfilment, under God, of the divine promise, “Instead of the fathers shall be the children.”

And this very interest with which Christ and his church regard the young, prompts us to a faithful exhibition of those *defects* which may exist side by side with the most amiable virtues of the human heart, and which form, with the class we have described, the chief barriers in the way of eternal life.

It is a sad truth that even a rigid and scrupulous regard for outward duty may be converted by Satan's artifices into an obstacle to salvation. Yet so it is, that while the gross transgressor, when plied with the appalling thunders of the violated law, may be led at once to see his guilt and danger and cry out for mercy, the outwardly upright and moral will reply to the divine requirements with the words, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." So said the young man to Jesus; and we will not charge him with conscious falsehood in the boastful assumption. He spoke from an honest, although mistaken judgment of his own character and life. The reply of our Lord was intended to correct this false estimate of himself, and to lay bare the plague of his heart: "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou

shalt have treasure in heaven ; and come, take up thy cross, and follow me."

What a severe requirement, it will be said ; must we then really part with every earthly possession in order to secure the heavenly ? No ; although as regards our ardor of affection and the force of our attachments, Christ's words are true for all : " Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple." But Christ read the heart of the young man before him, and saw that its besetting sin was love of the world. In bringing him face to face with it, he would reveal to him what he had before failed to discover, the *spirituality* of the moral law, and show him that however he may have conformed to the *letter* of that law, nay, although his righteousness may have exceeded that of the scribes and Pharisees, still he was guilty before God, and in all his upright-

ness was still lying under the sentence of condemnation. No doubt he was lacking in other respects, for "in many things we offend all;" yet Christ pointed to the chief flaw in his character, leaving it to his own conscience, thus partially enlightened, to suggest the rest. The event proved the wisdom of Christ's mode of dealing with him; for with all his apparent earnestness after eternal life, he could not endure the test. The earthly riches outweighed in his estimation the heavenly, and he went away from that interview with Jesus "sorrowful, for he had great possessions." He had come expecting to be assigned some laborious sphere of outward duty that should flatter instead of humbling his pride of heart; he returned grieved and disappointed by the discovery that he was not the saint he had supposed himself to be, but an unworthy sinner, clinging to an idol that

was destroying him, and yet which he had not the heart to surrender.

And so to every one, however exalted and shining his moral qualities may be in his own estimation, or in that of the world, if he rest upon them his hopes of life and glory, Christ distinctly says, "One thing thou lackest." Your life may answer the demands of the most exacting worldly morality, and the keenest human scrutiny may detect in it no flaw; while yet in the eye of God you are a sinner, guilty, condemned, perishing under the weight of his just wrath and curse. There is a wide difference between the human and the divine standards of judgment; and though Jesus may regard with tender interest the young and the amiable who aspire after his favor, his very death for sinners shows that he cannot and will not set aside those declarations of the law which we

all have broken: "He that offendeth *in one point* is guilty of all," and "cursed is every one that continueth not *in all things* that are written in the book of the law to do them."

It is to a conviction of this truth, and so to a conviction of guilt and impending doom, that every soul must be brought that would gain the prize of eternal life. To this end the great Teacher, in the instance before us, brings the youthful inquirer under the brow of fiery, quaking Sinai. See how its fierce lightnings play—the emblems of almighty wrath against every soul of man that doeth evil! Hark how its thunders go crashing through the false hopes and refuges of lies that men build upon their own wretched, imperfect goodness! Hear then, O soul, sounding to thine inmost depths the warning, "By the deeds of the law shall no man living be justified."

Lay bare thy heart of sin to the light that streams from the countenance of the Lawgiver, as hereafter it shall be laid bare to the eye of the Judge of all; and in that light survey, if you can endure the spectacle, your inmost thoughts and emotions, and you shall read upon them all, in the handwriting of Him who wrote the perfect law upon the tables of stone—those emblems of the hard, impenitent heart—this inscription: “Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting.” Here, at the foot of Sinai, is foreshadowed that scene which awaits us all hereafter, when infinite Justice shall arraign every heart and life of man before its dread tribunal, “and all the world shall become guilty before God.” We may come to the divine law as the youth came to Jesus, vain and self-confident, and hopeful of eternal life; but he must be blind indeed who can do other-

wise than go away "sorrowful," realizing the death-sentence that hangs over him, and with the voice ringing in his ears, and sounding its knell to his inmost heart, "*One thing thou lackest!*" There are heights in this law of God which all thy vain strivings after goodness fail to touch; and here are depths in which all thy best works are lost and swallowed up. You may be virtuous and upright, an ornament to society and the world; still, "one thing thou lackest." You may not want for comforts, riches, pleasures; but out of the midst of these unsubstantial joys, and from the dregs of every cup of earthly delight still comes the voice, "One thing thou lackest." You may even cherish the strong desire after eternal life, and the purpose of securing it; but until you have complied with the gospel requisition, desire unfulfilled and hope perpetually baffled will still cry

out, "*One thing thóu lackest!*" Oh, beware lest this voice, now uttered in gracious warning, should, because unheeded now, be spoken hereafter in your condemnation, and for the lack of the one thing needful, thy soul be driven away in its wickedness from the life and heaven that are now held freely out to you.

What then is the one thing that is necessary to our procuring eternal life?

Need we say that it is piety—the exercise of faith in Christ, and of a well-grounded hope in him? If, after the example of Christ, our thoughts have been directed to the law with its sentence of condemnation, it has been with the same end in view: that the law might, as the apostle says, be our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. We turn then from Sinai to Calvary, from the curse to the blessing, and repeat the Saviour's words

of grace to the young suppliant at his feet, "Take up the cross, and follow me." The cross that was set before the ruler was that of parting with cherished idols, and a self-sacrificing consecration of his all to the Lord Jesus. The same conditions are imposed upon every applicant for eternal life. Whatever may be the object that you value most, and that usurps the place of God in your heart, and hinders you from closing in with the gospel offer, whether it be the world or the flesh, riches, pleasures, friends, or an innate pride of morality that is unwilling to sit at Jesus' feet and accept the merits of his blood and righteousness, that is your cross, and Jesus bids you in his strength take it up and follow him. He bids you fly to him as your only refuge from the curse of the broken law and the frown of an angry God. If, by the truths we have now considered, he has

stripped you of the rags of an imperfect righteousness, it is that he may clothe you with the mantle of a perfect righteousness, in which you may stand accepted in the Lord's great day, and in which even the eye of infinite justice shall not discern "one thing" lacking. If he points you to your cross, it is not that, like the ruler, you may go away sorrowful, but that your sorrow may be turned into joy; for no cross is so heavy to be borne as the burden of unpardoned guilt; nor does Christ lay upon any disciple a weight so heavy and crushing as the one he bore for our salvation.

But why speak of crosses to one who aims at eternal life? Do not all toils, all sacrifices dwindle into insignificance when compared with so grand a blessing? Oh, set *this* before you as the object of your highest endeavors; and with such a prize in view, close your ears and steel

your hearts against every temptation to delay or falter in its pursuit; like Bunyan's pilgrim, who, when solicited by family and friends to turn back to the city of Destruction, put his fingers in his ears and ran on, crying, "Life, life, eternal life!" thus "flee from the wrath to come." Like the young ruler, let your heart, in its intense eagerness, come running to Christ, and in its deep humility kneel to him with the inquiry, "What must I do that I may inherit eternal life?" His answer to you and to all is this—Oh, ponder it well—"He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life." "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."



CHAPTER VI.

PAUL.

ACTS 8:1-3; 9:1-31; CHAPS. 14, 16-28.

WE are now called to notice one in whose person were perhaps united more of the elements of real greatness than in any other mere man who has lived. Paul leaps upon the stage of action a young, ardent, impassioned devotee of the religion in which he had been educated; strong and sincere in his convictions of duty, all his fresh energies consecrated to the work of suppressing what he honestly believed to be a dangerous heresy, and his earnest nature rendering him as eager a persecutor as he afterwards became a defender of the Christian faith. It is sad to look upon such a spectacle of conscientiousness in the commis-

sion of crime. Few are more to be pitied than the zealous bigot who truly believes that he is doing God service in his efforts to crush a rising truth and quench a dawning light ; and awful indeed would have been the career of this ardent Pharisee, had his after-life but half fulfilled the dark promise of his early manhood.

But his wonderful powers were destined to quite another and an opposite field of action. We know not whether the triumphant death of Stephen, with its exhibition of heroic faith, had suggested to his mind the doubt whether Jesus might not, after all, be the Christ ; yet it is not improbable that, as Augustine has remarked, "The church owes Paul to Stephen's prayer;" for, one day consenting to and aiding in that martyr's death, upon another, very soon after, it is said of him, "Behold, he prayeth;" and as of old it was asked wonderingly of the

wicked king seeking innocent blood, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" so erelong both Jews and Christians are astounded to find this bitter persecutor among the disciples of Jesus. But what can have wrought so remarkable a change? Mere human power may measurably tame the savage lion, but it cannot convert it into the lamb; and so neither can it turn the heart of man from fierce enmity to love, or convert the intolerant, blood-thirsty oppressor of the saints into their devoted friend and comrade in suffering. For a task like this, nothing but the grace of God is equal. Well, therefore, has it been said that, "next to the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the descent of the Holy Ghost, the gospel history has no testimony which equals the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. It has been felt in all ages; and many a reflective mind," (like that of Lord Lyttelton,) "hitherto un-

moved, has yielded to the power of this page of the gospel." Without stopping to dwell upon the circumstances of this wonderful conversion, it is enough to remark that, while upon his way to Damascus, still "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" against the Christians, he is arrested by a miraculous vision of the Lord Jesus, whose words strike conviction to his heart; and soon, with characteristic ardor, he is found preaching the doctrine that he had before so violently opposed.

It would be impossible that a man of such natural powers as Paul possessed should fail to make his strong impress upon his age and country, whatever might have been his chosen calling; and now that these powers are sanctified by the highest motives to the noblest ends, and crowned with that *grace* which, more than any thing else, exalts character, and gives

efficacy and right direction to the life of a man, we may well look for the best and grandest results. Nor are we disappointed. With unwearying ardor, this new convert defends and promulgates the religion of the despised Nazarene, identifies himself with the hated doctrines of the cross, and through a long course of years, and through a succession of trials almost without a parallel, toils and suffers in the service of the Lord Jesus. His course through Judea and the vast Roman empire is like a track of shining light. Christian churches everywhere spring up in his pathway ; and while upon the one hand Pharisaic bigotry quails before his vigorous assaults, so upon the other old heathen superstitions tremble at his approach, and almost ere he grapples with them, begin to fall. He performs, seemingly, the labor of a hundred men ; and when he gives to his life

and doctrines the appropriate seal of his martyr-blood, he has, as God's chosen instrument, changed the moral aspect of the whole civilized world.

In our attempts to analyze a character made up not only of such *varied* traits, but of such apparently *opposite* ones, all harmoniously balanced and adjusted to each other, it is hard to select any particular feature in which to hold him up as our pattern. We might view him as a trophy of redeeming grace, and yet as one of nature's noblemen; as a type of true moral courage, and at the same time of humility and self-distrust; as an example of lofty enthusiasm, and yet of rare prudence and discretion; as a pattern of the most consummate industry and activity, and yet of the most patient endurance and long-suffering.

Perhaps, however, we cannot do better than to include the more prominent

qualities of his character under the one term, MANLINESS. And let it be understood at the outset, that by using this phrase in such a connection, we would by no means so far degrade Paul as to apply it to him in its common acceptance, but would rather, if possible, exalt the idea of manliness above that which too generally prevails at this day, by exhibiting what we conceive to be its correct standard, as it is illustrated in the character and life of Paul.

It may be taken for granted that every youth aspires to be manly, according to his particular apprehension of the term, and there probably is not one who has not in his mind's eye some ideal standard in this respect at which he aims. Yet there are few words that are used with such vagueness and variety of meaning as this one. With some it means to be magnanimous, great of heart, and fear-

less for the right; with others, to resent injury, to be deemed high-spirited, and to go blustering noisily through the world; with others it is something pertaining rather to the baser instincts than to the brain or the heart, a glorying in what they call the "manly art of self-defence," or in low vice and dissipation. Thus one selects as his model a Howard or a Washington, another the duellist, and another, more depraved, the prize-fighter or the profligate, as their tastes incline. Alas, how few select a Paul, a John, or better still, Jesus himself.

And here, as the only way of getting at the truth, amid this conflict of opinion, occurs the question, What really constitutes the man? Is it the life of the body, or the life of the soul—the baser part of our nature that we have in common with the brutes, or the nobler one that we have in common with the angels? Your

own mind has answered the question, and has perhaps suggested the necessary truth, that mere physical strength or courage affords no measure of one's manhood. Paul was "in bodily presence weak;" will any say that he was therefore unmanly?

The truth is, the mind, the heart is the man; and the more exalted the qualities of these, the more the intellectual triumphs over the animal, and the moral over the intellectual, and the religious over the simply moral: in other words, the more we struggle up from our fallen and corrupted, towards the original, uncorrupted type of humanity when it was the very image of God, the farther we are removed from the beasts that perish; and the nearer we are allied to the higher orders of intelligence, the more complete and noble must be our manhood. It consists therefore in no single trait, but

in a union of excellences which, conjoined in symmetry, go to make up one's better nature, or rather, it is the best that there is in nature, crowned with grace. It is that which the most adorns and dignifies the merely human, enhanced and ennobled by the indwelling of the divine.

In no recorded life, save that of the Lord Jesus, do we find these varied elements of a genuine manhood more happily combined than in that of the apostle Paul.

I. The first of these that we shall notice is his *conscientiousness*.

If there is any one thing which more than others belongs to the very life and being of a man, it is conscience—that inward voice which shows that, however deserted, it is not wholly forgotten of its God—that vicegerent of Jehovah, whose

presence in the soul indicates at once our intended grandeur of character and our fall. Never can he be called manly, in the true, original intention of the term, who habitually disregards it. He is rather allied to the fallen spirits, or to those lower orders of creation, with whom mere appetite and instinct is the rule of action.

No doubt Paul was governed by a conscientious regard for duty, as well when persecuting as when defending the cause of Christ. He plainly comes under the prediction of our Lord to his disciples, "Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service," for he himself declares that he did it "ignorantly;" and his acts of violence, though by no means excused, are at least seen to proceed from a blind sincerity, when he says to king Agrippa, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do

many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."

And if a perverted, unenlightened conscience could so influence him to deeds from which his tender sensibilities must have strongly recoiled, how much greater its supremacy when it became illumined with heavenly light, and its voice echoed truly to his heart the voice of God. Henceforth it became a power indeed, not only in the bosom of Paul, but through him a power in the age to which he belonged; and to this day that clear, faithful, tender conscience of the apostle, embodied as it were in his life and words, is speaking to millions of other consciences, as once to that of Felix, the world over, and every candid reader of the Bible confesses its quickening power.

We recognize it in almost the first utterance which he was able to make, when

he lay trembling and blinded under the dazzling vision, on his way to Damascus, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" we see it in his straightway preaching Christ "in all the synagogues;" we hear it in that fearless discourse upon Mars' hill, where, in the very centre and stronghold of idolatry, he proclaimed the unknown God; we read it in those words of tender consideration for the scruples of the weak, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth;" and in that laborious care to avoid "the very appearance of evil," which led him to toil with his hands "night and day," lest he be in any way chargeable for his support to those to whom he ministered; we see it in the fidelity with which, in his last imprisonment, the chained apostle gained new converts in the very household of the bloody Nero, and then sealed his faith

with his blood. Indeed, next to his mighty faith and constraining love to Jesus, we may read the grand secret of his wondrous life in his own words to the Roman governor, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men."

Would that these words could be inscribed as a motto upon every young mind and heart, for they express a principle of action that lies at the basis of all desirable attainment in character and life—a principle without which there can be no security against temptation, and no real, abiding happiness either in this life or in the life to come; but animated with which, you will be able to "quit yourselves like men" in the conflict that awaits you.

And here we speak not of the natural, depraved conscience, but of that which

is enlightened by the Spirit and the word of God. To possess and obey this, is to be in a measure restored to the manhood from which we have fallen, and to be clothed anew with somewhat of the moral dignity that has so long lain trailing in the dust. It is not enough that our convictions of duty be honest; they must also be correct. Nothing is more false and fatal than the trite saying, that "it matters nothing what a man believes, if he is only sincere." In all the wide difference that you behold between the persecuting Saul, and the noble Paul earnestly deprecating his former course, you may see the distinction there is between a right and a wrong faith, though they be cherished with equal confidence.

Let the youth see to it that his conscience be rectified by a divine power. It is the very magnet of one's being, which, deranged and disorganized by

sin, trembles, now in one direction and now in another, and so has ceased to be a reliable guide through the world. Only He who is its Maker can reconstruct it. Let it be placed in his hand, and thenceforth it shall point steadfastly, as Paul's did, to the bright polar star of duty, to God and to heaven.

And then shall be fulfilled the injunction of David to Solomon, "Be strong, and show thyself *a man*." A rigid conscientiousness is an essential element of true moral courage. It is the strong garrison within, which renders one fearless of the foe without. The calm consciousness of being right and doing right, and of having the approval of God, whatever man may say, is of itself a tower of impregnable strength. It plants one's feet upon a rock, and braces him there for every onset, nerves the arm for all dutiful toil, girds the heart for all pa-

tient endurance, speaks out boldly in the voice, whether in confession of the right or in protest against wrong, and breathes in every action. It gives the truest independence, firmness, and decision; while its absence is the most prevalent source of slavish vacillation and ignoble fear. It is astonishing what power even an unenlightened conscience will give to a man when its dictates are faithfully observed; as, for instance, in the case of Pompey, who upon being remonstrated with against making a certain dangerous journey, replied, "It is necessary that I should go; it is not necessary that I should live." How bravely this principle spoke in the reply of the Paul-like John Knox when he was summoned to the court of Queen Mary, and told that "silence or the gallows" was the alternative. "My lords," said the intrepid man, "you are mistaken if you think

you can intimidate me to do by threats what conscience and God tell me I shall never do; for be it known unto you that it is a matter of no importance unto me, when I have finished my work, whether my bones shall bleach in the winds of heaven, or rot in the bosom of the earth." Who does not recognize in such words as these the ring of a true manhood, as well as of a lofty Christian faith and zeal? Well was it said of this brave man by a nobleman at his grave, "Here lies one who never feared the face of man."

What a surpassing grandeur then there is in the conscientious life. How it clothes one with a moral dignity such as no art can counterfeit, and no outward circumstances degrade or tarnish. It gives strength and symmetry to character, consistency to deeds, an admirable unity to the whole being, and makes one "every inch a man." And as it is the no-

blest, so too it is the happiest and most prosperous life. Upon this subject the testimony of the distinguished Lord Erskine is weighty and to the point. "It was," said he, "the first command and counsel of my youth always to do what my conscience told me to be my duty, and leave the consequences to God. I have hitherto followed it, and have no reason to complain that any obedience to it has been even a temporal sacrifice. I have found it, on the contrary, the road to prosperity and wealth, and I shall point it out as such to my children." Thus, in the moral government of God, do duty and interest always coincide; and he is not only unmanly who trifles with conscience, but is also a trifler with his present peace and comfort, and with his eternal welfare.

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II. The second trait of manliness illustrated in the character of Paul is *sympathy*.

And here again we are fully aware that we come in conflict with the popular idea upon this subject; for who has not heard it said that "it is unmanly to weep" or to exhibit emotion, whether in view of our own or others' sorrows? Probably the favorite conception of manhood is embodied in that description of one of Walter Scott's heroes:

"He turned away, his heart throbbed high,
The tear was bursting from his eye.

* * *

With haughty laugh his head he turned,
And dashed away the tear he scorned."

There are many who attribute the finer emotions and sensibilities of the heart to weakness and the want of self-control; but these surely do not reflect that it is

far better to be controlled by a generous sentiment, than to crush it; that it is more of a mark of weakness to repress the tear or feeling of sympathy, lest some one laugh at us, than to act out its lofty impulses; and that he is really the stronger, the greater, the more of a man, in every worthy sense of the term, who yields to and fulfils the better dictates of humanity, than the one who hardens his heart out of a mean subservience to the maxims and practices of others. The truth is, our sympathies are among the most hallowed and precious relics of the uncorrupted manhood we have lost, for they are among the most striking of the lineaments of the divine image in which we were created; and it follows necessarily that he who the most cultivates and improves them in a right direction, approaches the most nearly to the true, intended idea of manliness.

The life of the apostle Paul, like that of Howard, signally refutes the common fallacy, that the most tender sensibility to human woe is inconsistent with the greatest strength and energy of character. Did we know him only as a persecutor, we might indeed think otherwise; but in view of his whole career, we can only account for the severity of his earlier manhood upon the principle that his *conscience* was, as it should have been, even stronger than his natural feelings of compassion. That therefore seems a true representation of him which is contained in a celebrated ancient painting in the Royal Gallery at Madrid, in which Saul is said to be depicted as walking "with melancholy calmness by the side of the martyr Stephen to the place of execution," the sad expression of his countenance "contrasting strangely with the rage of the Jewish doctors and the feroc-

ity of the crowd who flock to the scene of bloodshed.”*

Then, however, it was sympathy sternly repressed, and we must look to his after-life for its full, unhampered manifestations, and of these there was no lack. For whether we see him, as at Ephesus, “warning every one night and day with tears,” or as when writing to the Philippians, “weeping” over the “enemies of the cross of Christ;” whether we look upon that parting scene at Miletus, where pastor and flock mingle their tears and sobs of mutual affection and regret, or read his friendly tributes to Titus, whose temporary absence so disquiets his loving spirit, and to Timothy, over whose interests he is so watchful; or contemplate his self-sacrificing generosity, first in the freeness of his arduous services, and then in his labori-

* Conybeare and Howson's St. Paul.

ous efforts in behalf of needy Christians in Judea, we find that his was the very soul of sympathy for the distressed, grief for the unconverted, and tender love for all men, not excepting even his worst enemies.

In these characteristics then, behold the man; and rising superior to the common, selfish ideas upon the subject, throw open your heart to the full exercise and development of your higher sensibilities; and in the practice of the pure charities of life, with an ear ever open to the tale of distress, a hand ever ready for those who need its help, and a heart to "weep with those that weep," both vindicate your manhood and become a blessing to yourself and all around you.

III. A third important attribute of true manliness is *patience*.

Great and noble as the apostle appears

in his active exploits, he reaches the height of his greatness when calmly enduring affliction and privation for the good of others. It is often easier to *do* than to *suffer*, to *labor* than to *wait*. To bear up calmly under disappointments and delays in some good work that has enlisted all our enthusiasm, to endure with serene composure the opposition of the wicked and the envious, to maintain the chafed spirit in silent self-mastery under neglect and scorn, and with steadfast, cheerful patience bide the hour of our vindication—all this calls for the very loftiest qualities of our nature, and requires, more than almost any thing else, a brave and vigorous manhood, to say nothing of the aid of a *divine* power.

It is difficult to understand how a mind so ardent and impulsive as that of Paul could yet possess itself in such untiring patience. From the very begin-

ning of his career as a Christian, he seemed to be a mark for the enemies of the cross, and whithersoever he went, insult and persecution were his almost inseparable companions. Hear his touching rehearsal of his sufferings: "In stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft; of the Jews five times received I forty stripes, save one; thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned." See him going forth upon one of his journeys with the full conviction that "in every city" "bonds and afflictions" awaited him; and yet hear him add with a heroism that is not born of earth, "But none of these things move me." No bitter word or sigh of complaint escapes his lips; and as he sings in the prison at Philippi, so afterwards, in all his tribulations he rejoices. Under the severest provocations to resentment he maintains a calm forbearance,

replying to all his accusers with the same courteous dignity; and in short, furnishes himself one of the most complete illustrations of that "charity" which he so glowingly describes, that "suffereth long, and is kind," "is not easily provoked," "beareth all things, and endureth all things."

What a type of manliness then have we here; nay more, of godliness. If such traits as these are not the native adornments of our poor humanity, they are nevertheless the jewels of our lost crown of universal love, which are restored through grace to the head that is bowed to receive them. And here we are approaching the truth, that our highest manhood is only to be found in that which allies us the nearest to our Maker, and that it consists not so much in natural gifts and endowments as in the pure graces of piety.

We all have occasion enough, in this respect, to “quit ourselves like men.” And here our first work is to rise above those low, false, brutal conceptions upon this subject which so generally prevail. The impatient, passionate, resentful man is honored by the multitudes; and the meek, forgiving, and forbearing, they brand as cowardly and mean-spirited. But who does not see that it is nobler to conquer self and passion, than to crush an outward foe—that it is the character of the savage beast to fret and retaliate when injured, but of a reasoning, high-minded man to possess the soul in patience? This is one of those particulars in which none are so manly as he who dares to be called by the unthinking crowd unmanly; and none so brave as he who submits to be called by the weak a coward.

IV. Another feature of Paul's manliness was his *humility*.

The higher we ascend in the scale of being, the more conspicuously do we find this trait of character exhibited. The fallen Lucifer and fallen man are puffed with pride, and even mouth out unblushing blasphemy against their Maker; but the angels bow with veiled faces before the throne, and the divine Son, their Lord, from his loftiest height stoops to the lowest humiliation of all, and takes on him the form of a servant. It follows from this, whatever may be the popular idea to the contrary, that the humblest man is ever the noblest, for he the most resembles the higher order of intelligences, while the proud and boastful are akin to the most degraded. He therefore is very far from being manly who plays the braggart. He who looks down superciliously and domineeringly

upon his fellow-men, proves himself thereby to be, not their superior, but their inferior; and whatever may be the claims that any one may set up to greatness, his very claiming of it best proves his littleness. When has there been a truly great man who was not at the same time humble, or a weak man who was not vain?

Few men have possessed more, either of gifts or attainments, that were calculated to flatter pride, than Paul; yet few have been so proof against it. Preaching once at Lystra, and performing a miracle of healing, the people thought him to be a god, and brought oxen and garlands with which to sacrifice to him; but his only expression was that of pain, as he rent his clothes, and made even their intended homage a text from which to preach boldly against idolatry. Learned, eloquent, and successful beyond meas-

ure, he yet exclaims, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross;" and calls himself "the least of all saints," "the least of the apostles," "not meet to be called an apostle;" and after reminding the Corinthian Christians how abundantly he had labored, he hastens to add, "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

Ah, ye who would be *men*, seek not the robes of state or the trappings of earthly power, but put on this beautiful garment of humility, than which nothing can more ennoble you in the eyes of God and all true men.

V. A last and crowning feature of real manliness is *likeness to God*.

As it was in this that the chief glory of our first parents consisted, so manifestly it is only in proportion as this is restored to us, that we can approach to

the intended grandeur and perfection of the human character. To this Paul aspired with a constancy of purpose which breathes through all his writings; the sum of his hopes and desires being this: to be like Christ in his life, like Christ in death, like Christ in the resurrection, and then "for ever with the Lord." We have beheld Paul as our pattern, but he himself bids us follow him only as he "followed Christ." We turn away then from the servant to the Master, from the man to the God, and look up to the very perfection of the divine character, as the lofty height at which it is our privilege to aim in the development and completion of our manhood. What a worthy and sublime ambition to animate the mind of a poor weak creature! How it should swallow up all lesser aims, and quench all baser motives, and fire the soul with a seraphic ardor, as it mounts

up on wings of faith and love towards the infinite and uncreated One.

This, even this, is your privilege. Oh, improve it well. Seek Paul's union to God in Christ by faith; throw your heart wide open to the blessed Spirit, who, it may be, now strives with you for your good, and who waits to renew you after the image of Him that created you; aim to be like God in mind, in heart, in character, in life, and he shall help your struggling endeavors, and you shall soon recognize one feature after another of his image in your soul; you shall walk forth arrayed in "the beauty of holiness," which is the very crown of manliness, for "the Christian is the highest style of man;" the sceptre that sin has stolen from you shall be given back, and as you grasp it, all shall confess its marvellous sway. Then with firm step, uplifted eye, and unfaltering heart, you shall tread your

path of life in kingly dignity, like that of Paul; and with him and all saints, "with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord," shall be "changed into the same image from glory to glory."

VII.

Jesus Christ,

A PATTERN FOR YOUNG MEN.

“YE hearts with youthful vigor warm,
In smiling crowds draw near,
And turn from every mortal charm,
A Saviour’s voice to hear.

“He, Lord of all the worlds on high,
Stoops to converse with you ;
And lays his radiant glories by,
Your friendship to pursue.

“What object, Lord, my soul should move,
If once compared with thee !
What beauty should command my love,
Like what in Christ I see !”

CHAPTER VII.

JESUS CHRIST.

THE painter who aspires to the highest success in his art will not only study the works of the great masters, but will also apply himself to that study of nature, in her original, inimitable beauty of form and grandeur of scenery, which has inspired them with their finest ideas and contributed to their best results. So he who aims at high moral excellence and power, will not be satisfied to contemplate even the best of imperfect men as his models, but will go directly to Him who is the original source and pattern of all their virtues. We have been holding converse with some of the great masters in the moral world; but our series of examples will

not be complete until we have studied the life and character of JESUS CHRIST. Indeed, it may be said that we have already looked upon these, as they were manifested in the persons of Joseph, David, Daniel, and Paul, whose highest excellences were not so much their own as Christ's shining through them and reflected by them. Yet it is better to walk in the beams of the sun than in those of the brightest planets—better to turn from the clouded radiance that in the best of mere men struggles out through human weakness and frailty, to Him by whose light alone they shine; for, while following them we might still walk in comparative darkness, the assurance is ours that he who followeth this “Light of the world” “shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

A sacred reverence well becomes us as we approach the study of this divine

yet human model. Let it be with deep humility that we now sit together at Jesus' feet, and hear his words and note his spotless life, and try to imbibe as much as we may of his spirit and his character; for it is only the lowly soul that is permitted to learn of him, and that mind must be deeply in earnest that would gain any real insight into the mind and heart of Jesus. Well may we join in the prayer, "O thou blessed 'Light of life,' shine into our hearts, and reveal to us thine excellencies, and so help our poor endeavors, by thy Holy Spirit, that even while we now look upon thee, our souls may be transformed into thy likeness; and thine shall be all the glory."

I. We remark first, that Jesus Christ is eminently adapted to furnish *a pattern for the young man.*

In our care to render due homage to the divine nature of the Saviour, there is danger lest we fail rightly to apprehend his human nature. The thought that *God* was manifest in his flesh, inspires us with reverence like that which we feel for the Father in heaven; and conscious guilt and unworthiness cause us to stand afar off from this majestic Being, as if he were simply to be adored. Far be it from us to lessen in any way this conviction of the divine glory of Him in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" yet let us not lose sight of the fact that he also possessed a nature and lived a life as completely human, with the one exception of sin, as that of any descendant of Adam.

He was thoroughly a child in his mother's arms, thoroughly a boy and youth in the parental home, and thoroughly a man. The tears that he wept, the hun-

ger that he felt, the toils of his hands, the slumber that refreshed him, the joys and griefs that moved him, the friendships he cherished, the blood he sweat, the life he yielded up, all were those of a man; so that he was not simply deity humanized, nor upon the other hand, humanity deified; but while he was no less God for being man, he was at the same time no less man for being God.

And he was once *a young man*, standing where every youth now stands, upon the threshold of active life, his habits taking their form and color, and his character being moulded and disciplined for the future. Ah, then he knows the heart of the young man, and can intelligently sympathize with all its joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, for he has felt them. None know so well as Jesus what it is to stem the current of strong temptation, to maintain right principles in the face of

difficulty, to dash from the lips the brimming cup of seductive pleasure, to tremble under the accumulating responsibilities of a dawning manhood; and his great brother-heart is interested in the struggle going on in every young man's breast, and his strong brother-arm is stretched out to help him to the victory.

He is then qualified by an ample experience to become not only our counsellor and sympathizer, but also our pattern. His recorded life is preëminently the young man's guide-book through this world; and the light of his example, shining on the darkness of our path, is the true "light of life." It is the standard of human excellence, written not in splendid precepts alone, as cold as the stone that contained the tables of the moral law, but transcribed into warm life and speaking deeds, its majesty in no way lowered, but rather attempered to our

gaze by the humanity through which it appeals to us.

Nor is this all. The life of Jesus had to do with the ordinary, every-day current of human affairs; and whether we view it in its social, civil, or religious aspect, we find that it deals practically with all great duties. It is then just what we need—just what, if we had it not, every true man would be sighing after—a faultless life in human flesh and blood, a career in which manhood has attained, through the ordinary courses of discipline, its full, intended development and manifestation. There is no other pattern that will not, upon close scrutiny, be found defective. Great virtues are sometimes attended with great vices; and he who copies after a faulty picture is likely to imitate the evil as well as the good. Here is the model upon which the youth may safely form his whole character. The

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life of Jesus is the mould from which our life should receive its shape; the footsteps of Jesus, which have left their print behind them, distinct and ineffaceable, are our most reliable waymarks through the wilderness which he has traversed before us; and the words and spirit of Jesus, dwelling in our hearts and producing in us the same fruits wherewith they clothed his life, furnish the best motives and aids to a blessed career through this world, and to the brightest destiny hereafter.

II. But secondly, *In what respects* is Jesus Christ our pattern?

It would be interesting to trace the marvellous outgoings of his *divine* nature in his contact with the world, to see the God performing by his hand and voice his wonders of omnipotence, bidding disease depart, and at a word breaking the

spell of death; but it is not under this aspect that we are now to view him. In his divinity he is alone and unapproachable; in his tender, self-sacrificing, and consecrated humanity, our nature speaks from its loftiest height of attainment. Oh for ears to hear and hearts to feel its impressive utterances!

1. The first, because fundamental feature of this perfect character that arrests attention, is, an entire *consecration to God*.

The key-note to his whole life is embodied in that saying of his early boyhood, when his astonished parents found him reasoning with the rabbis in the temple: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Devotion to God—of mind and heart to God's will, of body and strength to God's work, of life and being to God's glory—this was the sum of his career, the ruling principle that gave oneness to all his

purposes and consistency to all his actions. And this his consecration was no formal one, made up of words and professions—not that of the selected sacrifice, having only an outward, arbitrary relation to God, nor one merely partial, pertaining to occasional acts of service and of worship; but a conscious, entire, earnest self-surrender to the Father in heaven, a laying of the whole being, body, spirit, life, all, upon the altar, to do or to suffer, to be much or to be nothing, to be used or to be set aside, as best pleased the sovereign will. It was his meat and his drink to fulfil the will of the Father. “I came not,” said he, “to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me.”

Now as with Jesus, so with us: the completest human life is that of consecration to God. It were better not to live than to live to no holy purpose—bet-

ter to have the form of an irresponsible brute, than to wear the image of a man, which was originally the image of God, with all the powers and solemn accountabilities of manhood, and yet hold them with no reference to our Maker.

We are apt to think that we have a full right to ourselves, that we are at liberty to do what we please with both body and soul. It is not so. Our volitions are indeed free, and therein consists the essence of our responsibility; yet we really belong more to our Creator than to ourselves, and his are all our powers. And when we speak of consecration to him, we simply mean the restoring of these powers to the direction in which they were originally intended to move. The stars in the heavens are only secure from ruin so long as they keep each one in the orbit where God placed it, reflecting back the light that it

receives. Man is like a fallen star. -His soul has strayed away from its true centre, God, and is plunging fast into the darkness. Nothing can save it from becoming a total wreck but a restoration to its true and intended course, which is the path of holy consecration to its Maker revolving about his throne, and reflecting with clear light his glory.

We have held up the example of Jesus in this respect, yet we cannot forget that he was the Redeemer, not the redeemed—that his holy soul was not “bought with a price,” for it needed none, nor was his mind animated with motives drawn from deserved yet averted woe. Knowing as none else could know the Father’s love, he yet tasted not of his forgiveness. How much greater then *our* obligations; for with redemption held out to us, with a Saviour on the cross, and heaven opened anew to sin-

ners who had forfeited it, Oh what a double strength of motive claims our double consecration to the Creator and Redeemer! And thus, if the life of Jesus so powerfully commends to us this principle, how much more does his death, as it says to the souls that accept its benefits, "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits, which are God's."

Surrender your hearts then in solemn dedication to your Saviour God, and write upon all your faculties this consecrating tribute, "Holiness to the Lord." Not until you do this, will you truly begin to live; for however earnest be your aims and efforts, you will, without this to exalt them, be all the time trifling in a lower sphere, when you might instead be moving in almost a seraph's orbit. Only feel that you are living for God,

and you have at once the best safeguard against temptation, the most infallible guide to duty, the most essential element of a true and enduring happiness. Only live for God, and you are in a field for the unlimited expansion and development of your best energies; you breathe a purer air, you are braced with an unearthly strength, you eat of angels' food, and you begin heaven before passing the gates of death.

Do you shrink from the toils of such a life? Yet they are pleasurable ones. Do you dread its trials? Even these are sweetened by the grace that comes with them for their endurance. But with or without this principle, toils and trials are both before you. The sun of life's bright morning gilds even yonder clouds with beauty; but though now "no bigger than a man's hand," they may soon and suddenly lower upon you, charged

with terrific tempests of affliction. How can you so well endure their burden, so well bear up under care and anxiety, so well brave the shock of disappointment, reproach, poverty, death, as by imbibing the spirit of Him who, in his unfaltering consecration to the wise and loving Father in heaven, said of the bitterest cup ever placed to mortal lips, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

2. One of the most marked features of this consecration, as exemplified in the life of Jesus, was his *self-denial*.

We know that this phrase falls harshly upon the unregenerate ear, and that it is one of those expressions of the gospel which awaken at once the prejudice of the youthful mind, unless it has imbibed something of the mind of Jesus. But let us look at it for a moment.

See the devotee of pleasure glorying in his fancied liberty, as he yields the

reins to appetite and passion. Poor *self-denying* youth! if the cross that religion imposed were half as heavy as the one he carries, we might well shrink from it. For the sake of a few fleeting, soul-destroying pleasures, he is foregoing—what? The gift of pardon and the love of the Creator; denying himself the purest comforts of life, a hope in death, and an eternal weight of glory! His burden of unexpiated guilt is heavier far than any that the Christian bears, and the sacrifices to which he submits himself as far outmeasure those of the follower of Christ, as the ages of eternity exceed the years of time. Upon the other hand, see the disciple of Jesus surrendering himself to his true and eternal blessedness, foregoing a few temporary gratifications, denying his perishable self those things that would wreck his imperishable spirit—denying himself the doom and

woe of the unpardoned rebel. Now which of the two gives up the most? And thus it is that, strange as it may appear, the self-denial of the gospel is in the end the truest self-indulgence; and he who fancies that in sinning he is gratifying self, is only accumulating food for the bitter upbraiding hereafter, "Thou hast destroyed thyself!"

Never was this trait more beautifully exhibited than in him of whom it is written, "Even Christ pleased not himself;" and perhaps it was illustrated not less in what he forebore to do, than in what he did. For instance, there is something truly sublime and indicative of the completest self-mastery in the silence of Jesus until he was thirty years of age—the holding in reserve, during so many long years, energies that were all ablaze with consuming ardor for God's dishonored cause, calmly awaiting his appoint-

ed time for action. And when his real mission commenced, it was, from the beginning to the bitter end, one continuous sacrifice for God's glory and the good of men. With the natural love of ease which all possess, and with full power to gratify it, he yet had not "where to lay his head." Hungering, and able to turn the very stones into bread, and to feed five thousand by miracle, he yet preferred fasting to even a seeming distrust of Providence. His weary limbs craving their rest, he yet went unrefreshed, that he might pass the night in solitary prayer upon the mountain. Neither his tears of sorrow nor his smiles of joy, his labors, miracles, or agonies, were for himself, but all for others.

Ah, how mean appears the votary of pleasure or ambition by the side of such a pattern. Here surely is the very height of moral power; here the soul shines out

as never before nor since, in its truest dignity of character, as superior to the body, superior to suffering or shame, superior, as it ought to be, to life itself.

And need we say that this is the very principle that the young man needs, if he would make his life a triumph and not a defeat, a blessing and not a curse? The one victory that underlies all others is the conquest of self, the placing of a strong curb upon lust and appetite, the keeping of body, mind, and heart in their true subjection to the right. Without this, one will be the weak slave of every habit, an irresolute, half-formed man; his best purposes failing him in the hour of trial, and his most honest efforts doomed to disappointment and defeat. A miserable spirit of self-indulgence, yielding ever to the love of ease, to sensual appetite, or to dictates of passion, is what makes the sluggard, the drunkard, the

murderer, and fills our almshouses and our prisons. Its opposite, self-denial, makes the man of power, the industrious and the active, the noble and the great. Best of all, as a religious principle, it contributes to the highest moral strength and courage, and furnishes the heroic stuff that martyrs are made of. It seems a low and narrow gateway, but it stands at the vestibule of all that is truly good and desirable in life, and admits to the paths where angels walk.

3. Closely connected with this spirit of self-sacrifice was that of *beneficence*, in Him who, more than any other, "went about doing good." To rehearse his deeds of kindness would be to repeat his daily history; for what is the whole record of his life but the tracing of the one continuous stream of his compassion, that flowed through deserts of human wretchedness and want, making them to "blossom

as the rose?" As regardless of himself as most men are of others, he yet felt more tenderly for others than most do for themselves. He was peculiarly the friend of the needy and the sorrowing; and who was there that ever appealed in vain to his sympathy?

Behold here another feature of the consecrated life. Devoted first and chiefly to God, its object is also humanity at large; for the path of serving our Maker, while ending, as it begins, at the foot of the throne, winds through and around the walks of human life, leading now to the hovel of the destitute with gifts of substantial relief, now to the house of mourning with sympathy and succor for the bereaved, now to the abode of iniquity with kind effort at reclamation, now to the treasury of the Lord with means to extend his kingdom.

Who does not inwardly confess the

beauty and the blessedness of the life of love, the real glory that there is in even a single act of true-hearted beneficence? The great bane of the world, and the essence of its pride and crime, is selfishness; but so strongly is it rooted in our nature, and so artful are the illusions that belong to it, that it is hard indeed for any to see it in its true light, or to realize its awful tendency. Oh how stealthily it preys upon the soul, like a concealed worm, devouring every thing that is beautiful in human character; or rather, how, as by some subtle, unseen process, it petrifies the heart of a man, until he carries a stone in his bosom instead of a heart, and his whole nature, hard, flinty, unfeeling, becomes as indifferent to the tears and woes of humanity as is the cold rock to the rains that fall on its surface. Such a man must despise himself almost as much as he is despised by others, and

is himself a greater sufferer than any of those whom he refuses to commiserate.

In none does this miserable trait appear worse than in the young, and in none does a generous spirit shine with so pure a lustre. Oh, avoid the one as you would a plague, and foster the other as a means of godlike blessedness. The interests of humanity and religion, the cause of the needy and the perishing, call loudly, earnestly upon the consecrated benevolence of this generation. You who are favored with an opening manhood in this era of the church's dawning glory, possess such opportunities for usefulness as never were known before. Oh how a Paul, a Peter, a John would have revelled in these boundless fields that invite your efforts. Go forth then, and "sow beside all waters" and in all furrows, until your life is made blessed by the benedictions of many grateful

hearts, and your crown of glory sparkles with many jewels that your patient hand has plucked from the mire of earth, and which, by the grace of God, shall shine as stars for ever and ever. Try thus to fathom the divine philosophy of that saying which the world is so slow to accept, but which has never yet been falsified in the experience of any: "It is more blessed to give than to receive;" and know that

"The seed that in these few and fleeting hours
Thy hands unsparing and unwearied sow,
Shall deck thy grave with amaranthine flowers,
And yield thee fruit divine in heaven's immortal
bowers."

4. There are other traits of this perfect life upon which we should love to dwell, but we hasten to the consideration of the one which renders the Lord Jesus peculiarly a fitting pattern for the young—his *early piety*. Eager to be about his Father's business when only twelve years old, that self-consecration to God which

so marked his maturer years equally characterized his boyhood and his youth.

We scarcely know in what terms of tender earnestness to commend his example in this respect; for while this is by far the most vitally important subject that has yet engaged our attention, and one in regard to which we cannot be earnest enough, it is perhaps at the same time the one which many will be disposed to heed the least. As we enter upon it, the awful realities of eternity, with the retributions of the judgment-day and the scenes that follow, in which we shall each take part, come thronging upon the mind, and heavily oppress the spirit. By the light of the invisible world we behold in every youth an heir of immortality, and anticipate the period when his soul shall be pursuing its endless career of glory and bliss unutterable, or of shame and woe; and well may every other con-

sideration be forgotten in this one, which includes all, the absolute, indispensable need of salvation by the blood of Christ.

How can we adequately describe it? To say that you need it more than the starving need food, or the sick need health, or the dying, life, does not half express the urgency of this great want. Oh, it is not necessary that you be rich, or learned, or honored; but it is necessary that you be saved. It matters but little whether the coming years shall bring you prosperity or adversity; but every thing depends upon what the coming ages of eternity shall bring to you.

Oh the soul! more precious than all worlds—the lost, ruined, yet immortal soul, that lies under the frown of its Creator, and yet must live, though it be amid the pangs of the “second death”—“what is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his soul; or what shall a

man give in exchange for his soul?" And yet can it be possible that you are trifling with it, and that these gilded mockeries of so-called pleasure are successfully tempting you to wreck its everlasting interests and imbitter its immortality? What fatal delusion possesses you? What dreadful spell is locking your spirit in soft slumbers, that with death at the door—with heaven bent earnestly upon your salvation, and hell compassing your ruin—with the Saviour knocking at your heart, a patient suppliant, whose importunity betokens your peril, you can still remain unaffected? Ah, it is the spell of the tempter: yield to it a little longer, and you perish. Arouse thyself; shake off this stupor ere it become the sleep of that death whose only waking is to the resurrection of the lost.

But perhaps some assent to all that we say, and reply, Yes, I must bestir my-

self, and I will, by and by. Ah, this is just what yonder grey-haired sinner has been repeating to himself for nearly three-score years, "By and by;" and to-day he is farther than ever from the kingdom of God. To-day he sighs over vanished youth, and bitterly laments that he did not then yield himself to Jesus. It was the turning-point where many a one, now lost, has sealed his wretched destiny.

But why put it off? Think you that repentance will be any easier when the burden of your sin has grown to heavier proportions—when the current on which you now float has become stronger and swifter as it nears the final plunge? Think you that Christ will the more readily receive you when you have wearied his long-suffering patience with yet added rejections of his love; or the Spirit be more ready to renew you when you have again resisted his strivings?

Ah, while to all "now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation," to none is it so peculiarly the favored season as to the young. Most impressively is this truth illustrated by some statistics gathered with care by the late Rev. Dr. Spencer, in which he was at the pains to ascertain the different periods of life at which a thousand persons became converted to God. "Of these, five hundred and forty-eight, or more than one half, were converted when under twenty years of age; between twenty and thirty, there were three hundred and thirty-seven; between thirty and forty, eighty-six; between forty and fifty, fifteen; between fifty and sixty, three; and between sixty and seventy, *one*: only one out of a thousand!" What an awful demonstration of the folly and danger of delay; and how rapidly is the probability of one's becoming a Christian seen to

diminish as the years roll on. Do not facts like these give point and emphasis to the gospel's tender call upon the young, and clothe with a weighty significance the earnest appeal, "They that seek me **EARLY** shall find me?"

But what youth has the promise of reaching the thirty, forty, fifty years of life? One may say to the entreating Spirit, "Go thy way for this time;" but can he say it to death; can he say it to the Judge of all when he suddenly appears before Him? Ah, no! Then it will be His prerogative to say, "Depart!"

Fly now to Jesus, nor longer put from you his bleeding love. He who is your pattern offers to become your Saviour; and while in his holy humanity he has marked out your only safe course through life, he is able in the power of his divinity to uphold you in it, for he has both

sealed his example and rendered it effective to all who will believe on him, by offering up himself as your sacrifice.

And here, at the cross of the Redeemer, which we have been steadily approaching through this whole series of life-studies, and under whose shadow we have passed and repassed in the goodly company of ancient saints, and where now we may well rest, we close, well-satisfied to cease addressing you, if your ears and your heart can but be left open to the voice of the bleeding Saviour as it pleads with you for the love of your heart, the faith of your mind, the service of your life, beseeching your acceptance of his gift of pardon and eternal glory.

We have seen in the history of Joseph the importance of the season of youth in its position and its momentous bearings; in that of David, the weighty responsibilities, social, civil, and religious, of the

young man; in that of Absalom, the dangerous temptations that assail him; and in that of Daniel, his best safeguards and aids to duty. In Paul we have beheld a type of lofty manliness, crowned with earnest godliness; and now, in the blessed Jesus, we see both the perfect pattern of early consecration to the Father, and the Saviour and Redeemer of the young.

With JESUS as our theme, we have reached a point beyond which none can go. We leave you with him, his dear name the last to linger on your ears. Oh that his Spirit may write it indelibly upon your heart—that it may be your joy and strength in life, your hope in death, your song and your glory throughout eternity: for “there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved,” but the name of JESUS.

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